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# **The Hidden Voices of Nuu'Chah'Nulth Women**

By

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# Abstract

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The role of women among Nuu'Chah'Nulth culture has received little attention. As Perdue<sup>1</sup> discusses, few sources exist from the eighteenth century about the lives of Aboriginal women, and what does exist has, in the main, been written from white European and male viewpoints, obscuring women's voices and thinking.

I will examine the roles and responsibilities of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women today and over the last two hundred years since Cook's arrival in Nootka Sound on the west-coast of Vancouver Island, during the turbulent, colonial times of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to the traumatic era of the lives of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women in the second half of the twentieth century, times of intense cultural change. Whilst building on the research and written observations of explorers, naturalists, fur-traders and Indian agents I hope to give a unique and complex view of how the arrival of the mamalhn'i<sup>2</sup> affected the lives of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, how these women adapted change to their advantage wherever possible through the inspiring words of the women themselves. Thought-provoking, in-depth interviews with thirteen Nuu'Chah'Nulth women conducted over a three year span form the heart of this thesis, adding originality to a sound historical base.

I will argue Nuu'Chah'Nulth conceptions of gender roles have persisted until the twenty-first century despite the traumatic influence of colonialism and residential schooling. Maintaining traditional gender roles has allowed Nuu'Chah'Nulth women to adapt to changing circumstances and adopt new industries and practices whilst upholding their cultural identities as First Nation women. The strengths of their traditions empowered the women to resist change, including pressure from federal government to relinquish culture and language, bringing to life women long ago consigned to the shadows of historical anonymity. Continuity and diversity mark the lives of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, their strengths creating the values and behaviours necessary to restore balance to their families and communities.

By examining women's role in community and family life over the last two hundred years, I will argue Nuu'Chah'Nulth women were co-equal contributors to Nuu'Chah'Nulth life, balancing the areas in which women were (and are) the anchors of their culture whilst also acknowledging their interactions with new influences from the twenty-first century.

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<sup>1</sup> Perdue, Theda ((1998) *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835* University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln: T. Perdue is a highly respected ethno-historian who, in her writing, reflects her deep knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal society and the varying roles of Aboriginal women.

<sup>2</sup> Mamalhn'i means 'the people who came from over the sea, the white men'.

# Acknowledgements

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Dr Michelle Corfield: Chair of the Legislature at Ucluelet First Nation; Executive in Residence, Aboriginal EMBA at Simon Fraser University; CEO at Corfield Associates Consulting Services;; Vice President at Nuuchah-Nulth Tribal Council, January 2006 – September 2009: Michelle is an innovative facilitator, mediator, and process designer. She has spent many years working towards developing ways to move First Nation people and communities forward using a balanced, holistic approach. Her vision and belief in me has ensured I have been able to undertake this research venture by enabling opportunities to meet and interview Nuuchah-Nulth women. Without her the research would not have been possible. Thank you, Michelle.

Thirteen Nuuchah-Nulth women interviewed during the years 2009 and 2010 in Port Alberni, Nanaimo, Nuuchah-Nulth Reserve, Zeballos, Gold River and Ahousaht. The narratives of these women form the bedrock of my evidence, offering insights into their lives, their world. Thank you Ina and Charlotte, Eileen, Jackie, Evelyn, Anne and Kathy, Georgina, Brenda, Delores, Louise, lens and Genevieve for your belief in me.

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# Terminology

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The Nuu'Chah'Nulth, the people at the centre of this thesis, have a history that pre-dates (and eventually includes) their encounters with Europeans. I believe there is an issue concerning terminology and people's understanding of language, and as the author of this study I have a dilemma surrounding the usage of specific words, such as pre-contact, hunter/gatherer, occupied, settler which invades Nuu'Chah'Nulth history, re-enforcing colonial visions of the past, and in the process diminishing Aboriginal history and the people themselves. Historians do include Aboriginal people in the stories they write; however, the narrative structure continues to revolve around European experiences rather than Aboriginal people and their history, placing these two societies on an unequal footing. I am also guilty of this as I write as a western woman about another culture. I have attempted to address the issue throughout this thesis although the process is fraught with difficulty. Despite the growing number of people studying Canadian history, I believe it still remains a discipline anchored in European traditions. It will take time to change people's approach to and understanding of writing about other cultures but the process needs to begin by re-framing research from a past that is different to a colonial past, otherwise it will be difficult to discard the words used to describe this past perpetuating the colonial research process. It is necessary to use a vocabulary that reflects the worldviews, influences and importance of the people I am studying.

Depending on the context within which I am writing, the words First Nations, Aboriginal and Indian (historical references) have all been used. First Nations, a term that collectively refers to various Aboriginal people who are neither Inuit nor Métis, came into common usage in the 1980s to replace Indian, a misnomer given to Indigenous people by Columbus and early European settlers who erroneously thought they had arrived on the Indian sub-continent. Under the Royal Proclamation of 1763, also known as the Indian Magna Carta, the Crown had referred to Indigenous people in the British Territories as Tribes or Natives, two words Nuu'Chah'Nulth women disliked and words I have endeavoured not to employ, using instead band or people or Nuu'Chah'Nulth.

Occasionally I have included some Nuu'Chah'Nulth words in the text (in *italics*); however translating into English does not always produce a true meaning of Nuu'Chah'Nulth words. English equivalents or approximate translations are to be found in the relevant footnotes.

# Chapter One:

## 'Hidden Voices' - Introduction

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In the 1970s I remember hearing, from all over the Nuu'Chah'Nulth coast, people saying 'women were the backbone of the communities', how women have the strong minds, it is the women who remember.<sup>1</sup>

Little is known about First Nation Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, how they were affected by historical events and the cultural changes that reshaped their lives, as historical sources generally obscure women's experiences. It is the intention of this research to give a voice to Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, whose family lands are situated along the west-coast of Vancouver Island in Canada, to show the rich co-existence of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women with each other and the land that surrounds them, to contend there is more to their lives than a western understanding and perception, and to redress balance by bringing women's voice to the fore. Despite the isolation of some of these communities, I have been honoured to meet these women, to spend time with them, talk with them, and to interview them. These accounts form the bedrock of evidence for this study empowering these women by giving them a voice through stories and histories, their narratives serving to uncover memories. By probing and investigating my thirteen interviews, the traditional skills and economic roles, status, and power of these women in their families and communities will emerge.

This research is about women's history, a very detailed, in-depth study that elucidates a branch of history with the aim of bringing out the voice of the women of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth. In the wider historical picture these women are First Nation, affected by colonialism, a feature of Canadian and inevitably western history; in other words, this is a study of a group of First Nation women who represent a fragment of the larger picture of western history, an exercise inclusive of and within women's history through the example of Aboriginal women. This historical case study is situated at the intersection of three challenging research areas: women's history, Aboriginal Studies, and oral history. All three are encountered within different contexts presenting a treble challenge to the researcher, and explored through the history of this specific group, Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, the research presenting a dialogue between past and present.

This thesis on the silent voices of Aboriginal women is informed by research questions I have set to discover and explain the historical, social, cultural, economic, and political

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Anne Robinson, May 2009, Port Alberni: p9-10 of transcript; Anne talked about the importance and respectful way of listening, of telling young women the significant things they need to remember when growing up.



development of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, how they have become who they are now, why their histories have been hidden and how their lives have changed over time by using a variety of sources to capture the essence of my research as succinctly as possible. Women are central to this research. To this end, I intend to look at Western European observers and their comments about Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, an interesting aspect in its own right, comparing their lives to the women I have met. I will consider what has already been written by historians, by Charlotte Cote and Ruth Kirk who write specifically on the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, Emma LaRocque and Kim Anderson, writers on First Nation women, and Paula Gunn Allen who wrote eloquently on Native American women.<sup>2</sup> The research explores representation of the catalysts of change, the detrimental and damaging effects of colonisation, assimilation, and residential schooling that took over their lives, and how, despite adversity, life is beginning to return to some 'normality' within the advances of a twenty-first century worldview.

The scope of this study extends from the arrival of Captain Cook in Nootka Sound on March 31<sup>st</sup> 1778 until the present day, exploring the historical context and lives of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women over the last 200 years and, in the process, aims to evaluate their role and status in Nuu'Chah'Nulth society, to determine the economic and social standing of the women. I intend to question the reasons why there has been, and still is, a paucity of information about First Nation women, in particular Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, sentiments endorsed by Eileen:

I find Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, Aboriginal women, to have such strength and endurance, visionary and very creative, those very strong, very solid foundations, ... so many writings are very focused on the male and very few writings reflect on the women, very few writings bring forward the women's voice. It has to do with balancing, with balancing of voice.<sup>3</sup>

These powerful words, spoken during an early interview, clearly speak to the research proposals, emphasising Nuu'Chah'Nulth women's determination to counter-balance biases found in white, and often male-dominated, historical accounts.

My research questions arise from the centrality of the oral traditions of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, and my methodologies, as a non-native researcher, have been shaped and

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<sup>2</sup> Dr Charlotte Cote, associate professor of American Indian Studies, University of Washington, a member of the Tseshaht First Nation; Ruth Kirk, writer and photographer; In 1986 she published *Tradition & Change on the Northwest Coast: The Makah, Nuu'Chah'Nulth, Southern Kwakiutl and Nuxalk*, University of Washington Press, Seattle; Emma LaRocque, Plains Cree Métis, author of *When the Other is Me; Native Resistance Discourse, 1859-1990*, (2010) among others; Kim Anderson, Cree/Metis writer and educator *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*, (2006) and *Strong Women Stories: Native Vision and Community Survival*, (Eds.)(2006) Sumach Press; Paula Gunn Allen, Laguna Pueblo/Sioux and literary critic and author of *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*, (1986) Beacon Press, Boston among others.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009 in Port Alberni: p.2 of transcript.

challenged by a number of disciplines combining oral history, feminist theories, and Aboriginal studies as well as drawing evidence from history. The interconnectedness of the women's lives with each other with significant times in history during the impositions of colonialism, together with historians' portrayal of First Nations' history is paramount to my research. It is necessary to place the oral testimonies within the text at pertinent places and times connecting these accounts with significant people whose lives have been associated with Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, to understand the influences, contexts, and associations between early visitors to their lands and the Nuu'Chah'Nulth themselves. There are significant events and cross-cultural encounters over the last 200 years connecting the Nuu'Chah'Nulth with the colonisers: Captain Cook's arrival in Nootka Sound in 1778 and his meeting with Chief Maquinna of the Mowachaht; Gilbert Malcolm Sproat and his observations of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women in the 1860s;<sup>4</sup> Edward Curtis and his photograph of Virginia Tom;<sup>5</sup> Nuu'Chah'Nulth stories and drawings recorded by anthropologist and linguist, Edward Sapir in the early twentieth century. In order to make sense of new interview data, it is essential to know what has been written, to compare and to test the veracity or relevance of what I am being told alongside this wider body of evidence.

The search for source material has been extensive, covering, as it does, publications from the last two hundred years. Although early written documentation on this oral society is limited and often based on preconceptions and misunderstandings it has been possible to find some invaluable and enlightening references to and observations of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women adding new insightful dimensions to the research. Imagine my delight, and surprise, on reading late eighteenth and early nineteenth century travel journals and writings of Captain James Cook, John Meares, Ensign Alexander Walker, Jose Mariano Mozino, John J. Jewitt, and others, to find written observations empowering Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, noting their prestige in eighteenth century Nuu'Chah'Nulth society, and commenting insightfully on women's modesty, dress code, social decorum, manners and weaving skills. By drawing on this evidence, it has been possible to form detailed pictures of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women and their communities, their economic role, and an impression about the women themselves. Likewise, the writings of Gilbert Malcolm Sproat in the mid nineteenth century offer observations and insights not only into Nuu'Chah'Nulth culture and the important role played by women in society, in decision making, in the economy, and within families but also how their lives were

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<sup>4</sup> Gilbert Malcolm Sproat founded the first sawmill in Port Alberni in 1860, became a colonial magistrate in 1863, and was at the forefront of Indian Land Commission efforts to dispossess the people from their lands although there is evidence he does show concern in his writings about the plight of the people.

<sup>5</sup> Photographer Edward Curtis took this photograph around 1915.

affected and changed by the invasions of settlers, colonisation, and reserve living.<sup>6</sup> Although detailed references to these journals are made in later chapters, it is worth citing examples from the journals of James Cook and John Meares chronicling their voyages to the north-west Pacific at the end of the eighteenth century.

Cook notes his frustrations in trying to secure agreement between himself, as the British representative and Chief Maquinna of the Mowachaht.<sup>7</sup> Negotiations and deliberations were often held up as it was important for the chief to confer with senior women in the community during the extended ceremonies laid on to entertain and welcome Captain Cook. The Mowachaht would often disappear for four to five days in order to return with fresh supplies of 'skins and curiosities which the crew were passionately fond of.'<sup>8</sup> Although he recognises his limited contact with Nuw'Chah'Nulth women, Cook is very aware of their influence and standing in the communities, noting his surprise at how industrious women were in welcoming him by preparing food for the visitors, spreading 'a mat for me to sit down upon and showing me every other mark of civility.'<sup>9</sup> A few years later in 1788 John Meares wrote.

The whole of our mercantile dealings was carried on by making reciprocal presents: ceremonies accompanied with utmost display of pride and hospitality; when the

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<sup>6</sup> *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean undertaken, by command of his Majesty, for Making Discoveries in the Northern Hemisphere: To Determine the Position and Extent of the West Side of North America; its Distance from Asia, and the Practicality of a Northern passage to Europe Performed under the Direction of Captains Cook, Clerke, and Gore in his Majesty's Ships the Resolution and Discovery, in the Years 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779 and 1780 in Three Volumes; Vol. 1 and Vol. 11 written by Captain James Cook, F. R. S., Vol. 111 by Captain James King LL. D. & F. R. S., Published by order of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, London in MDCCLXXXIV (1784); Meares, John (1790) *Voyages made in the years 1788 & 1789 from China to the North West Coast of America to which are prefixed, an Introductory Narrative of A Voyage performed in 1786, from Bengal, in the Ship of Nootka; Observations on the Probable existence of a Northwest Passage & some account of the trade between the North West Coast of America and China, & the latter Country & Great Britain*, Topographic Press, London, MDCCXC; Sproat, Gilbert M. (1868) *Scenes and Studies of Savage Life*, Smith, Elder & Co., London / reprinted by Bibliolife, 2006; Drucker, P. (1951) *The Northern and Central Nootkan Tribes*, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 144, Washington, DC; Pethick, D. (1980) *The Nootka Connection: Europe & the Northwest Coast 1790-1795*, Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver; Arima, E., St. Claire, D., Clamhouse, L., Edgar, J., Jones, C. & Thomas, J. (Eds.)(1991) *Between Port Alberni and Renfrew: Notes on West Coast Peoples; Mercury Series, Paper 121*, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Quebec; Fisher, Robin (2000) *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver; Hoover, Alan (Ed.) (2000) *Nuw'Chah'Nulth Voices, Histories, Objects & Journeys*, Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, Canada; Harris, Cole (2002) *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance and Reserves in British Columbia*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver; Jewitt, John R. (1851/2005) *White Slaves of Maquinna: John R. Jewitt's Narrative of Capture and Confinement at Nootka*, Heritage House Publishing Co. Ltd., Surrey, BC; Fisher, R. & Bumstead, J.M. (Eds.)(1982) *An Account of a Voyage to the North West Coast of America in 1785 & 1786 by Alexander Walker*, Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver; Mozino, Jose M. (1792/1991) *Noticias de Nutka: An Account of Nootka Sound in 1792*, University of Washington Press, Seattle.*

<sup>7</sup> Cook, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*: p278.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p279.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p280.

present stock of skins exhausted went for more.<sup>10</sup> The rage for presents prevailed ... and even the ladies would interfere in making a bargain, and retard the conclusion of it, till they had been gratified with an added offering.<sup>11</sup>

Over half a century later in 1868, Gilbert Sproat echoes these words<sup>12</sup> in his detailed observations of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, referring to their modesty, dress and personal cleanliness, as well as their economic role in the communities.<sup>13</sup> By combining this archival evidence with my interview transcripts, a detailed picture of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, then and now, emerges.

It is my aim to rid the contemporary reader of common inherited assumptions of First Nation women in general, and the Nuu'Chah'Nulth in particular, to expose misconceptions, expel illusions, to disabuse the reader of the idea women are passive and play a secondary role in society, that Nuu'Chah'Nulth women had no voice. As a non-native researcher, it is difficult to explain their worldview in a few words, to clarify how it differs from Euro-American thinking. There are certain words that epitomise the Nuu'Chah'Nulth worldview, words that will have greater understanding as this thesis develops: balance, interconnectedness, interrelatedness, unity, and harmony. However, it is important to remember it is my understanding and perception of their worldview. I, like many anthropologists and researchers, have found the challenge of translating language and understanding cultural differences to be complex.

The Nuu'Chah'Nulth worldview responds positively to relationships between people and place, history, identity, the natural and spiritual worlds; all is interconnected. However, such a view has not been appreciated by Western commentators over the last two hundred years. This, it might be contended, could be because those early explorers', commentators', and historians' responses to the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, and other First Nation groups, have been culturally determined by colonialism, capitalism, notions of cultural supremacy, greed for land, ownership of land, all of which would divide up Aboriginal land and establish new boundaries, rather than entertain ideas based on the notion 'Everything is One' (*heshook-ish tsawalk*).

The research needs to be placed geographically. Vancouver Island's rugged west-coast is the traditional homeland of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, the 'West-Coast People' who dwell along the mountains and seas on land stretching three hundred kilometres from Brooks Peninsular in the north to Point-no-Point in the south. The majestic grandeur, rugged mountains frequently

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<sup>10</sup> John Meares' Journal, Monday 16<sup>th</sup> June 1788: pp140-141.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> June 1788: pp141-142.

<sup>12</sup> Sproat, G.M *Scenes and Studies*: p.5; references to Cook, Meares and Jewitt; see also Chapter XII, Condition of Women: pp93-102.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid: Sproat details the dress and ornaments worn by Nuu'Chah'Nulth women.

shrouded in mist and cloud, lush green forests of cedar, spruce, and fir, sweeping sandy beaches, rocky headlands with deep fjord-like inlets, and numerous bays make-up a diversity of environments containing varied resources enabling a sustainable lifestyle.<sup>14</sup> The outer coastal rim provided space for whales, sea-lions, sea-otters, seals and halibut while the protected inner waterways, sounds, inlets, and rivers were home for salmon, herring, and shellfish. The Nuu'Chah'Nulth were noted for their maritime way of life, the whale hunt and its associated rituals, a prime salmon harvest, smoking fish, and weaving, representing Northwest coast culture, where women were an integral part of this sustainable economic framework.<sup>15</sup>

Researching for literary documentation on First Nation women, and Nuu'Chah'Nulth women in particular, has been difficult because there has been, and still is to a certain degree, a paucity of written texts.<sup>16</sup> First and foremost, it is an oral society: culture, stories, and knowledge are passed down through the generations, grandmother talking to grandchildren, an elder talking to children, so it has been rare to find First Nation histories in which women occupy more than a brief mention. Women are often invisible in texts and their words infrequently referenced, but this silence is changing as academic literature and papers written by First Nation women increase.<sup>17</sup> Until the 1980s, when gender issues began to be taken seriously and focus on women's history increased, literature and studies of First Nation women were limited and, if mentioned at all, were accorded a subservient or minor role. Despite an enlightening publication, 'Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom and Strength,'<sup>18</sup> the

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<sup>14</sup> I viewed the majesty and grandeur of the terrain on a number of trips across the mountains from Nanaimo to Port Alberni and Ucluelet between 2008 and 2012. This description goes some way to illustrate what I was seeing, an expression of my thoughts.

<sup>15</sup> Atleo, E. Richard (2004) *Tsawalk: A Nuu'Chah'Nulth Worldview*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver; McMillan, A.D. & St. Clare, D. (1982) *Alberni Prehistory: Archaeological and Ethnographic Investigations on Western Vancouver Island*, Theytus Books, Penticton, BC: p.1; Drucker, P. (1955) 'Sources of North West Coast Culture' in Meggers, B. (Ed.) *New Interpretations of Aboriginal American Culture*, Anthropological Society of Washington: pp59-81; Borden, C.E. (1951) 'Facts and Problems of Northwest Coast Pre-history', 2: 35-52 in *Anthropology in British Columbia*, Victoria: p.39; Drucker, P. (1955) *Indians of the Northwest Coast*, The Natural History Press, NY; McMillan, A.D. (2000) *Since the Time of the Transformers: The Ancient Heritage of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, Ditidaht, and Makah*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver: pp12-22.

<sup>16</sup> See Monture, P.A. & McGuire, P. (Eds.)(2009) *First Voices: An Aboriginal Women's Reader*, INANNA Publications & Education Inc., Toronto; Lischke, U. and McNab, D.T. (Eds.)(2005) *Walking a Tightrope: Aboriginal People and Their Representations*, Aboriginal Studies Series, Wilfrid Laurier Press, Waterloo Ontario; Valaskakis, G.G., Dion Stout, M., & Guimond, E. (Eds.)(2009) *Restoring the Balance: First Nations Women, Community, and Culture*, University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg; Carter, S. and McCormack, P. (Eds.)(2011) *Recollecting: Lives of Aboriginal Women of the Canadian Northwest and Borderlands*, AU Press, Athabasca University, Edmonton.

<sup>17</sup> Battiste, M. (Ed.)(2000) *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver; Monture, P. & McGuire, P. *First Voices*; Valaskakis, G.G., Dion Stout, M. & Guimond, E. *Restoring the Balance*; Carter, S. & McCormack, P. *Recollecting*.

<sup>18</sup> Miller, C. & Chuchryk, P. (Eds.)(1996) *Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom, and Strength*, University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg; published after the National Symposium on Aboriginal Women

lives of First Nation women 'are still largely invisible in that genre of literature',<sup>19</sup> a fact highlighted in the very first interview with Charlotte and endorsed by her sister, Ina:

I am very excited because I do feel that women have not really had a voice for a very long time. ... When you are doing research you never find information on women and you never really find much on First Nation women, you never really find too much on First Nation people; it is very limited so I am very excited for that reason. Nothing was ever written in terms of 'this is how women behaved in the community or this is the woman's role in the community because they've never been recognised, they've never been identified'. Many women do not recognise their roles or voices any more but they are starting to, we have a revival.<sup>20</sup>

I also feel the same but I also believe very strongly that as Nuu'Chah'Nulth women we have had an informal process in terms of how our voices are heard and hopefully, in this interview, it will be able to come through in terms of understanding our voices as women are very varied, very instrumental in what happens to a lot of things and from what we learned ... because of things that happened, mainly residential school, I think our voice has been quieted and women need to recognise our voice was there.<sup>21</sup>

These views are strengthened in a recent comment reacting to the reduction of federal funding to Canadian archives, funding cutbacks making it difficult for people to explore and research the history of women, of First Nation women.

The preservation of Canadian women's history is especially significant; with holdings ranging from rare newspapers to government reports to community organisations' records, LAC plays an invaluable role in documenting the experiences and accomplishments of Canadian women and racial and ethnic minorities.<sup>22</sup>

Printed evidence is limited and, in the main, written by men,<sup>23</sup> but, by the late twentieth century academic papers and books penned by First Nation women appeared, countering the marginalisation and silence of Aboriginal women's voices. The publication from the colloquium, 'Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom, and Strength',<sup>24</sup> reflects theoretical

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of Canada: Past, Present and Future, held at the University of Lethridge, 18-21 October 1989, the first symposium to address issues concerning Aboriginal women of Canada.

<sup>19</sup> Anderson, Kim (2011) *Life Stages and Native Women: Memory, Teachings, and Story Medicine*, University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg: p.15.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Charlotte 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009 in Port Alberni: p.1 of transcript.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Ina: p.1 of transcript.

<sup>22</sup> Cuts to Canadian Archives and the Preservation of Canadian Women's History, 25<sup>th</sup> May 2012; posted 6<sup>th</sup> June 2012 on [H-CANADA@H-NET.MSU.EDU](mailto:H-CANADA@H-NET.MSU.EDU) The cuts to funding are serious as several archival programmes rely upon federal funding. The loss is especially significant for Canadian women historians because materials pertaining to women are often located in local, publicly-funded repositories. The cuts make it more difficult for people to explore women's history; LAC = Library and Archives Canada.

<sup>23</sup> See: Moser, Charles (1925) *Reminiscences of the West Coast of Vancouver Island*, Kakawis, BC; Drucker, P. *The Northern and Central Nootkan Tribes*; Duff, Wilson (1964) *The Indian History of British Columbia*, Anthropology Memoir No. 5, Provincial Museum, Victoria; Fisher, R., *Contact and Conflict*; Knight, Rolf (1978) *Indians at Work: An Informal History of Native Indian Labour in BC, 1858-1930*, New Star Books, Vancouver.

<sup>24</sup> Miller, C. & Chuchryk, P. (Eds.) (2001) *Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom, and Strength*, University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg. This edition is more recent than the one mentioned earlier.

and personal perspectives of women, celebrating and communicating knowledge of First Nation women. The following compelling words succinctly sum-up the challenges, beliefs and principles of not only this gathering but of all First Nation women and, by association, Nuu'Chah'Nulth women:

Voices. Many voices. Diverse voices. Women's voices. The voices of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, community grassroots activists, Metis women, academic women, and Native Elders. Women brought together to celebrate together the power, wisdom, and strength of First Nations women in Canada.<sup>25</sup>

From diversity comes strength and wisdom. There is no single voice, identity, history, or cultural experience that represents the women of the First Nations:<sup>26</sup>

The words emphasise there is no hierarchy, no single voice but a collective, diverse, inter-connected voice. The colloquium highlighted the importance of voice, how women communicate across class and culture, how women listen and talk to each other, challenging assumptions the words of First Nation women form a 'single voice, a single identity with a homogenous history and a singular cultural experience.'<sup>27</sup> Instead, they purport it is difficult, unrealistic, and incorrect, to present a single voice. An anthology of Aboriginal women's writing, appearing in 1990, reinforces this point.<sup>28</sup>

They are voices that have not been widely heard until now and have been missing from all Canadians' understanding of our society and literature. These voices will challenge expectations of what Aboriginal women are or should be saying.<sup>29</sup>

These words confirm 'there is no more a monolithic 'native' world any more than there is a uniform 'white' world.'<sup>30</sup> The collections counter the marginalisation of Aboriginal women, reflecting the power, strength, and wisdom inherent in their lives.

The Lethridge meeting provided an excellent occasion for women to talk, for all women's views to be listened to, valued and respected without fear of discrimination or intimidation, for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women to meet, to make their thoughts and voices accessible to a wide audience. One observer, however, noted an over-emphasis on academic discourse, with limited time for informal 'chat' amongst women, with the result that some women felt side-lined and threatened. The formality of the seating and centrality of the single voice, privileged, in the lecture format, was not appropriate. Being in a 'room full of smart women all lined up facing the front listening to someone talk at us,'<sup>31</sup> leads us to realise

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<sup>25</sup> Powerful words from the Introduction of Miller and Chuchryk: p.3.

<sup>26</sup> Miller & Chuchryk, words taken from the back cover of this edition.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.6.

<sup>28</sup> Perrault, Jeanne & Vance, Sylvia (Eds.) (1990) *Writing the Circle: Native Women of Western Canada – An Anthology*, NeWest Publishers Ltd., Edmonton, Alberta.

<sup>29</sup> Perrault, J. & Vance, S., *Writing the Circle*: p.xi.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.xii.

<sup>31</sup> Miller & Chuchryk *Women of the First Nations*: p.5.

the legacy of western group organisation and western privilege still persists. Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, familiar with group activities such as dances, a potlatch,<sup>32</sup> or a story-telling circle, would understand the protocol and sensitivity of seating arrangements, never emphasising individuals as all endeavours are respected.

Twenty-five years ago, Emma LaRocque argued that educated First Nation women had been accused of speaking in their own voice, suggesting their research was less substantive, less academic, and biased.<sup>33</sup> Since that time, contributions of First Nation women to academic writing has increased considerably, providing much needed alternative perspectives on Canadian history, new methodologies and new directions in thinking. However, it is pertinent at this time to remind the reader of a fact noted by Nuu'Chah'Nulth scholar Charlotte Cote who found, whilst researching her book on Makah and Nuu'Chah'Nulth whaling, 'over 90 per cent of the literature on Native peoples and their histories is written by non-Indians,' so defining the parameters of Native American Studies under a Euro-American umbrella.<sup>34</sup> An alternative view and further word of caution is expressed by Choctaw/French scholar Devon Mihesuah, when she says using the Native voice exclusively may not present a precise picture of past events, and ignoring material written by non-Indians is not an option, as a balance is necessary to communicate Aboriginal thinking.<sup>35</sup>

The qualitative research methodologies underpinning this study provide insight into, and the tools for, debates about cultural difference, understanding someone else's world. Through analysis of interview and archival records, it is possible to listen to Nuu'Chah'Nulth women's voices, to discover their roles and responsibilities in their communities, their strengths, knowledge and skills, and how historical events have affected and changed their lives.

The main thing our people wanted to be heard ... so those lessons I learned way back when – to listen, to really listen.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Feasts or ceremonies; potlatch is a word coined by colonialists not a Nuu'Chah'Nulth word.

<sup>33</sup> LaRocque, Emma (1988) 'The Colonization of a Native Woman Scholar' in Miller, C. & Chuchryk, P. (Eds.)(1996) *Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom, and Strength*, University of Manitoba Press: pp11-18.

<sup>34</sup> Cote, Charlotte (2010) *Spirits of our Whaling Ancestors: Revitalizing Makah & Nuu'Chah'Nulth Traditions*, University of Washington Press, Seattle: p.10; see also Donald L. Fixico 'Ethics and Responsibilities in Writing American Indian History' in Mihesuah, Devon A. (Ed.)(1999) *Natives and Academics*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln.

<sup>35</sup> Mihesuah: in Introduction to *Natives and Academics* p.2-3; a seminal/key debate in Aboriginal Studies that centres on issues of representation of First Nations, past and present. See also Kim Anderson, Ruth Kirk and others.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Louise, 30<sup>th</sup> April 2010: p.12 of transcript.



# Chapter Two:

## 'Hidden Voices' - Methodologies

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*[My grandmother] remembers a lot of her Elder teachings her people have passed on; they would teach her a lot, they were always very kind and caring and loving and she hung on to her language ...being surrounded by culture and language; ...it was always oral traditions.<sup>37</sup>*

In the light of the research questions, I have marshalled a body of evidence based on interviewing Nuu'Chah'Nulth women over the period 2009 to 2011, and during the processing of this textual evidence, I have benefitted from the critical positioning of such methodologies as oral history, Aboriginal, and feminist approaches. The methodologies informing my understanding of oral history I believe are appropriate for interrogating a collection of texts and artefacts<sup>38</sup> that not only have their roots in mythology and Nuu'Chah'Nulth history, but also collectively challenge a male, colonial gaze purporting to be an 'understanding of someone else's world'. Qualitative research offers routes into Nuu'Chah'Nulth culture, challenging patriarchal, colonial (and empirical) views of history. My responses to both the interviews and (white) historical accounts of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, will inevitably engage me in debates that have concerned anthropologists and sociologists for years, centring on the dilemma: how does one consciously adopt such methodologies, importing Euro-American views, and yet, still retain sensitivity to indigenous, and specifically, Nuu'Chah'Nulth women?

Qualitative research<sup>39</sup> works with text so interview transcriptions, journals and other documentary evidence provide varied and rich records for analysis, scrutiny, and interpretation. When considering various theoretical approaches to interview transcripts, and possible contextual frameworks,<sup>40</sup> it felt significant not to pre-determine the ways of categorising the body of ideas transmitted by the Nuu'Chah'Nulth women I engaged with. The practice of interviewing, responding to the interview and regarding the transcript as 'text' involved a fluid path from theory to text and back to theory.<sup>41</sup> The cultural world of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women cannot be studied effectively without talking to the women and

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009: p.2 of transcript.

<sup>38</sup> Texts will include interviews, journals, newspapers, books, Indian Agent Reports; the following artefacts will be researched: photographs, artwork, weaving examples such as baskets and hats.

<sup>39</sup> Flick, U. (2002) *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, Sage Publications, London.

<sup>40</sup> Oral history, Aboriginal and feminist writings.

<sup>41</sup> It is necessary to understand that 'text' in this context can also refer to and represent a range of written evidence: narratives, journals, newspapers, books; visual and archival data: artefacts, art, and photographs.

listening to the transcripts. Ethnographers<sup>42</sup> not only observe and consider people's way of life, attempting to understand another's culture they also work with cultural artefacts, written texts, and recordings. According to Coffey and Atkinson:

... Documentary sources are not surrogates for other kinds of data. We cannot ... learn through records alone how an organisation actually operates day to day. Equally we cannot treat records – however official – as firm evidence of what they report.<sup>43</sup>

In other words, it is impossible to learn about people's cultures through archival papers alone, there needs to be contact with people as documentary evidence provides a partial or an incomplete view of how culture develops and evolves. As social data is meaningless without human input, applying oral history methodologies creates a more inclusive and complex history, moving beyond what is already known and written.<sup>44</sup>

## Historical Evidence

Studying the past informs the present, telling us who we are and where we have come from, a fact true of any group or society. It can be said the past is in the present, that researchers rely on references to archival documents to justify and inform the present. It is also true to say knowledge of history helps anthropologists, historians and ethnographers explain the origins and development of specific contemporary social phenomena, changes in social structures, and economic and government impositions. Similarly, Nuu'Chah'Nulth women are influenced by their traditional past in meeting the demands of the present. Therefore history, especially oral history, is by its very nature, a collaborative field, representing cumulative knowledge, telling us stories of communities, 'Her' story as well as 'His' story that enlighten us on the constant evolution of culture. Oral history allows us into the stories and lives of the past, to inhabit another person's history. The quality of the information can be problematic: descriptions may be subjective, transcriptions incomplete or misunderstood, translations incorrect; interpretations may vary depending on the direction of scrutiny, and, more importantly, the information maybe very selective or biased on the part of the writer of original documents. However, this immediately raises a question: how is 'oral' any different

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<sup>42</sup> Ethnography comprises two words: 'ethno' means folk while 'graph' derives from writing, referring to the study of and writing about a particular group of people: see Clifford, J. (1986) *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, School of American Research Advanced Seminar, University of California Press, Berkeley; and Clifford, J. (1988) *The Predicament of Culture: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Ethnography, Literature & Art*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>43</sup> Coffey, A. & Atkinson, P. (2004) 'Analysing Documentary Realities' in Silverman, D. (Ed) *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Sage Publications, London: pp56-75:58; see also Silverman, D. (2006) *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Sage Publications, London: p.169.

<sup>44</sup> Abrams, L. (2010) *Oral History Theory* Routledge, Oxford; Perks, R. & Thomson, A. (Eds.)(2010) *The Oral History Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Routledge, Oxford; Trimble, C.E., Sommer, B.L. & Quinlan, M.K. (Eds.)(2008) *The American Oral History Manual*, Left Coast Press, CA; Armitage, S. (Ed.)(2002) *The Frontiers Reader: Women's Oral History*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln.

from 'written' history? Both can be challenged by the same charges as 'written text' is no more accurate than 'oral narratives'. If, as Paul Thompson asserts 'all history depends ultimately upon its social purpose,'<sup>45</sup> one can ask why has 'written' history come to be considered more 'true' than oral?

The 'facts' of history should be questioned as facts never come down to us pure; they are always refracted through the mind of the narrator or researcher, and depending on the particular interest of the historian, the narratives of events are easily embellished, distorting the truth.<sup>46</sup> It could be said history is not a truthful arrangement of what happens in sequence but an arrangement of surmises and guesses depending upon sources of information, the way those sources are interpreted, and the quality of the facts. Put another way, is history people's memories in sequential order, and if so, how reliable are these memories, and how sequential the order? Many versions of similar stories and historical events are recounted that may or may-not fit one's own memory; in other words, an informal history comprising facts, beliefs, and perceptions. Stories are history; this is what history is. Some stories might coalesce into one story, a story that has survived, passed down through the generations continuing to be retold, adapted, and changed introducing current political themes, ideas, and events. Details are often lost in the retelling, and different versions of events may not fuse comfortably with personal recollections and memory. Sometimes facts are forgotten, distorted or subtly changed, and new details added. The tales of history can be unreliable as they are reconstructed by humans so, to achieve maximum veracity, it is important some undisputable historical facts are included, around which discourse concerning interpretation can evolve, as centred upon these truisms, history develops and evolves. For example, subtle changes in thinking and perceptions arose in an interview when talking about the effects of residential schooling on women. This example of fluidity and shifting views is explained.

Some families had three generations at residential school and so the challenge for them is what that grandchild is going to say: 'my grandmother said this, my grandfather did that' Now, is what that person's grandparents did real or was it distorted from the impacts at residential school? Then what happens to that teaching; that's the part that really bothers me, that we rely so much on our grandparents' teaching, and today no-one is going to argue with you if you say 'my grandmother said this'. You're not going to say 'your grandmother didn't do that, that didn't happen; your grandmother didn't know anything'. You're not going to disrespect your grandmother. But what happens if your grandparent was severely impacted by what

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<sup>45</sup> Thompson, Paul (2000) *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Oxford University Press: p.1.

<sup>46</sup> Carr, E. H. (1961) *What is History?*, Penguin Books, London: Carr laid out the historiographical principles rejecting traditional historical methods and practices; based on Carr's series of GM Trevelyan lectures delivered at Cambridge University, January-March 1961; considered to be a middle of the road position between the empirical view of history and R. G. Collingwood's idealism.

happened in residential school in the way bad things come forward. ... So that grandparent teaches the parent who teaches that child and it becomes a family value and a family culture and now this child is a grandparent ... and so they've taught it down the family ... And that worries me.<sup>47</sup>

'Facts' about residential schooling are being unintentionally distorted, memories circle around becoming enshrined as fact, so how 'do you tell the difference between what was the truth, the true route, and what became the damaged truth, the damaged route.'<sup>48</sup> It is interesting Anne uses the word 'route' instead of words we would commonly use: version of events or history. The implication is there are traditional views of history, or 'routes', and another view of history or route, impacted by residential schooling. For whatever reason, the two are merging in family histories, and in the official records of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.<sup>49</sup> Within these traumatic periods, memories circle around suppressing certain actions and events; but relationships between facts and memories develop that invite greater understanding.

History means interpretation and questioning: do the facts influence what a historian writes or does the historian choose 'facts from the past' he or she intends to turn into historical arguments or 'truths'? What is apparent is studying the facts, or other points of view, causes the historian to reconsider their thinking or even to change their views. E. H. Carr argues history is an unending dialogue between the past and the present, where historians are influenced by the present when writing about the past.<sup>50</sup> Historians must concern themselves with the uniqueness of history when discussing people and events according to the morals and values of that time and those people. History, not just history created by historians, appears to fall into two distinct domains: the nation state forges the 'official narratives', often to strengthen certain ideological characteristics, while the 'memory site' exposes the struggle between the experiences of the past (memory) and the organisation of the past (history). Both need to be considered in the current debates concerning settler nation-building and people's recollections of the past, between memory and history.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Anne Robinson's interview, May 2009, Port Alberni: pp18-19 of transcript.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.19.

<sup>49</sup> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has a mandate to learn the truth about what happened in residential schools and to inform all Canadians of what happened. The Commission will document the truth by recourse to documents, and testimonies from both survivors, and those who ran the government-funded, church-run schools set up to eliminate parental involvement in the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual development of Aboriginal children.

<sup>50</sup> Carr, E. H., *What is History?* p.215.

<sup>51</sup> Pierre Nora 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire (Places of Memory)' in *Representations* 26, Spring 1989, University of California: defines what is collective consciousness and social thought.  
<http://www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/classes/201/articles/89NoraLieuxIntroRepresentations.pdf>

Anthropological studies, historical documents, and journals usually make reference to men although the data will inevitably include women. Thus, in many Euro-American historical accounts, omitting women or unintentionally stressing the social role of men, or giving a selective viewpoint from a male stance, can change commonly held viewpoints pertaining to First Nation women's role and status in the community.<sup>52</sup> An incomplete picture is presented. Western notions of Nuu'Chah'Nulth history and culture portray a partial viewpoint, misrepresenting the people, especially the women.

In a recent book *Contesting Archives*,<sup>53</sup> different writers question and challenge the assumption an archive is a 'neutral, immutable, and a historical repository'<sup>54</sup> of information. These historians consider the archive to be a place where decisions are made about whose documents are significant, and, in the process, whose history is worthy of further scrutiny. As they found women's voices and words were often obscured or missing altogether, by reading and considering documents in a different way, the authors have been able to weave together many layers of information to reveal and reconstruct some of the complexities of women's lives lost to historical record.

Research should question the authenticity and contexts of archival documents. Carr, quite rightly, makes the observation no document can inform us more than what the author originally thought.<sup>55</sup> An apt comment. The dilemma for historians, when confronted with information, is in deciding what should be included and what should be omitted, and these change according to the biases and agendas of the researcher. As it is impossible to use all the available material from different sources and genres, historians are selective using what catches their imagination applying the relevant facts to their own theoretical framework or research questions: in other words, rewriting the past, using their own interpretation of the evidence. Is offering an alternative and believable view a distortion of evidence? The reality is historians are not passive observers; all are selective in their use of evidence and search for the 'truth' about the past. Herein may lay the problem in attempting to unravel the reasons why women have been omitted from so many historical records. Historians respond to the

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<sup>52</sup> Clifford, J. (1986) *Writing Culture*.

<sup>53</sup> Chaudhuri, N., Katz, S.J. & Perry, M.E. (Eds.)(2010) *Contesting Archives: Finding Women in the Sources*, University of Illinois Press: Global in scope this volume demonstrates innovative research on diverse women (including Aboriginal women) from the sixteenth century to the present day; As Margaret Strobel, co-editor of 'Expanding the Borders of Women's History' says: '*Contesting Archives*' makes vivid and concrete the way historians must proceed when faced with partial or contradictory sources. Historians appreciate strategies for, and cautions about, unearthing information about women from documents inside and outside the archive. Like the title suggests all the essays (except one) in this book are written by women; for example Nupur Chaudhuri, Sherry Katz, Mary Perry and Lisa Sousa.

<sup>54</sup> Chaudhuri, N., Katz, S. & Perry, M. *Contesting Archives*; back-cover and introduction.

<sup>55</sup> Carr, E. H. *What is History*.

debates often generated in academic forums, and, with the best intentions, attempts are made to address the obvious gaps and omissions in historical accounts. However, in doing so, we generate and apply our own conceptual and theoretical frameworks, re-writing the past from a personal viewpoint with a tendency to emphasise some historical fact to fit a theory. Whatever the argument, it is imperative past accounts are re-written/re-thought to include women so offering a broader and richer understanding of history.

Now, in the twenty-first century another issue has arisen providing a new dilemma (or opportunity?) for historians: an insurmountable accumulation of data through digital preservation and internet access is transforming the way we record and convey history.<sup>56</sup> Historical digital sources have reached a scale that defies conventional analysis so computational analysis is needed.<sup>57</sup> Archives are increasingly committed to preserving cultural heritage material in digital rather than traditional analogue forms, as exemplified in Canada by digitisation priorities at Library and Archives. The amount of digitised material continues to grow daily raising the question: who has time to access all this material? A further crucial question arises: will women continue to remain 'hidden' from new historical sources or will it be easier to access and research information on women?

There is another dilemma. A recent decision to reduce federal funding to Canadian archives suggests monetary cutbacks will make it more difficult for people to explore and research the histories of First Nation women.<sup>58</sup> In reference to the above funding, Lara Wilson, of the Canadian Council of Archives, encapsulates exactly the importance and value of archival material when she says:

"Archives really are about the memory of our nation. They tell us who we are, where we've been, what we've done."<sup>59</sup>

A positive outcome appears to be restoration of oral traditions by using digital technology to preserve and distribute oral histories to a wider audience as digital technology makes it possible to hear people's stories anywhere and anytime.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Some examples of data storage: Internet archives have 2.9 million texts, 2.6 million pages of historical newspapers at the chronicling America site of the US Library of Congress, McCord Museum at McGill University has 80,000 plus historical photographs, Google Books have digitised 15million books out of a total goal of 130 million.

<sup>57</sup> The Gale Digital Collections, the largest digital collection in the world, have digitized millions of books and historical collections from around the world in all languages, <http://gdc.gale.com/>.

<sup>58</sup> Cuts to Canadian Archives and the Preservation of Canadian Women's History, 25<sup>th</sup> May 2012; posted 6<sup>th</sup> June 2012 on [H-CANADA@H-NET.MSU.EDU](mailto:H-CANADA@H-NET.MSU.EDU); Cuts to funding are serious as several archival programmes rely upon federal funding. The loss is especially significant for Canadian women historians because materials pertaining to women are often located in local, publicly-funded repositories. The cuts make it more difficult for people to explore women's history: LAC, Library & Archives Canada.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted in a CBC News item on funding cuts to Canadian Archives, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2012.

Viewing the past through the eyes of the present, it could be said all history is contemporary. However, by imposing modern agendas on our understandings of the past, an important issue is raised. How can we reconcile modern attitudes towards Aboriginal women with a nineteenth century perspective of a different culture? In this thesis, historical accounts, whether collected through archives or oral testimony, are considered through a twenty-first century outlook. The findings and conclusions are potentially very interesting as I am presented with reflections and representations from three very different centuries, the nineteenth, the twentieth, and the twenty-first from a very specific focus group, Nuu'Chah'Nulth women. A variety of opinions, attitudes and interpretations emerge, from which new questions arise: how far are interpretations of evidence shaped to meet and please a particular audience, and who is the audience, First Nation women or academics? Could analysis and interpretation meet both expectations? Will the research offer an accurate, valid and truthful interpretation of the past, of the role of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women?

'Histories and identities, both national and personal, are closely entwined, not only with each other but also with the culture from which they originate' wrote Olive Dickason.<sup>61</sup> I am, therefore, urging towards a vibrant and flexible view of history and, like Carr, 'seeing history as an unending dialogue between past and present,'<sup>62</sup> a view of history closer to Nuu'Chah'Nulth thinking. Dickason continues saying cultures and people are not static but dynamic and flexible, accommodating, reflecting the past as well as the present. Whether the histories are based on oral or written traditions, the sense of identity is solidly based in the past, a record of where we are from and how we got to where we are today, so important in history. In Western eyes, history is essentially a chronological and analytical narrative of significant human actions based on documents, a model of history historians believe spoke for a society bringing civilization to a land inhabited by 'savages'. Even today, Canada's Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, has decided to commemorate the War of 1812 as the war signified 'the beginning of a long and proud military history'<sup>63</sup> in Canada, a comment that appears to

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<sup>60</sup> An example of oral history accessed via the internet is [www.jukeboxuaf.ed](http://www.jukeboxuaf.ed). Listeners anywhere in the world with an internet connection can listen to oral histories from Aboriginal people on topics of interest in Alaska.

<sup>61</sup> Dickason, O.P. 'The Many Faces of Canada's History as it Relates to Aboriginal People' in Lischke, U. & McNab, D. (Eds.)(2005) *Walking a Tightrope*: p.117.

<sup>62</sup> Carr, E.H. *What is History?* p.215.

<sup>63</sup> Posted on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2012 in a response to "What's Wrong with Celebrating the War of 1812?" by Ian McKay and Jamie Swift in <http://ActiveHistory.ca/>; Although Tecumseh is celebrated as a hero, the fact that First Nations people were the war's real losers will be downplayed. After 1814, with the Treaty of Ghent betraying the people, the First Nations came to be treated as "Wards of the State" not separate entities.

omit any reference to Aboriginal people and their history. Harper's argument is countered by Tom Peace who questions Canadian celebrations that omit First Nations:

First Nation migrations during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (like that of the Wendat to the north shore of the St. Lawrence River or the Haudenosaunee to the Grand River) became events that we (as Canadians) allowed and directed, despite the French and British Empires having only a marginal presence in these areas at that time.<sup>64</sup>

First Nations view history differently, tracing their histories through myths and stories telling of people and their relationships with the land, the natural world and spiritual powers. It is essential to make sense of these collective experiences to conceptualise First Nation history within the context of Aboriginal worldviews, and Nuuchah-Nulth worldviews in particular. Events are embedded into stories and rituals that symbolise rather than report chronologically. Take for instance, the true event of the meeting between Chief Maquinna and Captain Cook in 1778, an event permanently fixed in Nuuchah-Nulth traditional tales.<sup>65</sup>

Storytellers are performers as well as tellers of tales designed to be listened to and heard; storytellers enact the 'dynamic and flexible' aspects of collective memory of key events. With constant retelling interpretations vary, each storyteller re-envisioning the tales afresh while still retaining the substance, so different from a literate tradition that formally fixes words and ideas in print. Myths, never intended to be set in print, are narratives 'calling images into the mind with spoken words', rather like reading a painting.<sup>66</sup> Nuuchah-Nulth stories keep alive memories of historic events reinforcing a sense of personal and community identity, the history of the Nuuchah-Nulth, providing a fuller understanding of their historical context. The following story illustrates this point. When discussing reasons why Nuuchah-Nulth families moved into Port Alberni to attend public rather than residential

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<sup>64</sup> 'In the Beginning there was ... Canada?' posted by Tom Peace, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2012 at <http://ActiveHistory.ca>; A further post on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2012, *Myth-making & the Non-Commemoration of the War of 1812*, by Greg Kennedy, questions Harper's statement: First Nations military support during the war led to modern Canada; respect for the 'rights of Aboriginal people' is questionable. Kennedy questions the word 'respect' given the history of Reserves and residential schooling. He ends by saying Tecumseh's dream of a large economically viable and politically autonomous Aboriginal territory died with him in 1813.

<sup>65</sup> See Chapter 3 for detail; In Chapter 1 of his book, *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative*, Tom King compares the native creation story with the creation story according to the St. James version. Creation stories often have the theme of co-operation – all things co-operate together in the world, animals and humans, celebrating equality and balance. In the western world, everything is governed by hierarchies, God, man, animals, plants, laws, government; co-operation is never mentioned as one needs to follow the set rules.

<sup>66</sup> Brighurst, Robert (1999) *A Story as Sharp as a Knife: The Classical Haida Mythtellers and their World*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Douglas & McIntyre, D&M Publishers Inc., Vancouver: p.54; see also Cote, C. *Spirits of our Whaling Ancestors*; the Sapir-Thomas Nuuchah-Nulth or Nootka Texts/Tales recorded between 1910 and 1923 in Port Alberni.



schools, Charlotte links family relocation to the Tsunami<sup>67</sup> that hit the west-coast of Vancouver Island in March 1964:

There were more First Nations that lived in town because of the tidal wave that came through in March 1964 that devastated a lot of the communities on the west-coast. ... If progress had continued to be slow the feeling of community would have continued to be a slow process but because it happened all so quickly, all so sudden, it was really different. ... It took quite a few years for people to ... find balance and stability. If the tidal wave hadn't happened there would have been a slower adjustment to town.<sup>68</sup>

This story explains a great deal about community life in the 1960s, illustrating how even a global natural disaster can impact upon these women's lives helping to appreciate and understand the changes occurring within families and communities, and how women's lives adapted to those changes. Nuu'Chah'Nulth history and community life shifts direction and begins to move at a different pace.

Two different approaches -myths/stories and documents- but the goals are the same: to read and understand a past that shapes the present. The researcher is informed by both the historical documents and the subjectivities of the women whose cultural world is shaped by generations of stories and historical events. Storytellers work by personal contact within small communities while historians deal with widespread communities through print, removed and impersonal. While historians could be considered detached and objective in their reporting and analysis of historical events, a First Nation storyteller is the opposite; however, both work towards realising a sense of identity and understanding.

The very process of history-making has been interrogated by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples,<sup>69</sup> providing a useful stepping stone towards a non-Euro-American view of history, routes towards an appreciation of strategies in accessing 'the culture from which they originate', and Aboriginal worldviews. In 1996, the Royal Commission reported the literate world aimed at a 'universal' history, but within oral traditions historical accounts depended on 'who is telling it, the circumstances in which the account is told, and the interpretation the listener gives to what has been heard.'<sup>70</sup> The report emphasises the point:

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<sup>67</sup> Alaskan Tsunami, Good Friday, March 1964; the tsunami hit Alaska sending a series of seismic waves along the west coast of Vancouver Island; Alberni valley badly damaged; however it must not be forgotten that other settlements were also affected as the old gold mining town of Zeballos was mostly washed away.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Charlotte, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009; pp9-10 of transcript.

<sup>69</sup> The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) issued the final report in November 1996; a 5 volume, 4000 page report with 440 recommendations calling for changes to the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and the Canadian government, said to be the most important report ever written.

<sup>70</sup> RCAP Vol. 1: pp32-36.

... [history is] characterised in part by how a people see themselves, how they define their identity in relation to their environment, and how they express their uniqueness as a people.<sup>71</sup>

Does this imply there are as many histories as there are historians? There are those who believe 'the contradictions in what constitutes history – oral or written – cannot be resolved.'<sup>72</sup> Western history, according to the Royal Commission, speaks to the past with past events as one-time occurrences, and First Nations history speaks to the present, seeing events as on-going processes. However, western history is constantly being reinterpreted in light of new knowledge, new questions arising out of recent concerns in an ever changing society: for example, how women are viewed in history. With new insights and understanding, women's history is perceived differently although the historical facts and content surrounding women remains the same.

### Historical Artefacts

Let us consider some of these ideas from the Nuu'Chah'Nulth perspective of the past, how we access it, and its relation to the present. From an Elder's point of view, museum artefacts are not art but their history and heritage, inseparable from myths and stories. The Nuu'Chah'Nulth believe everyday articles should not be interred in glass cases in provincial museums but used within household routines, as the people often fail to see the relevance of positioning artefacts within a museum context. However, studying these objects may bring to light more knowledge of Nuu'Chah'Nulth society, the skills of the women, and, more importantly to understand more fully their society in a twenty-first century context. There are numerous examples of Nuu'Chah'Nulth basketry, woven capes, shawls and hats in local museums so linking relevant family names to exhibits highlights women's designing skills, affording chances to interpret and understand their society as well as giving respect to these items.<sup>73</sup> As many of the women interviewed are weavers, understanding the individual designs embedded in the weaving presents further evidence and greater appreciation of how they express their creativity, the meaning of the pieces, insight into family traditions, and most importantly, testimony of their extraordinary weaving skills. The following provides an excellent example of the continued resourcefulness of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women.

A seventy-one year old Nuu'Chah'Nulth Elder is a professional Master weaver, basket maker designing the motifs for the hats she weaves out of sedge, sea grass, and cedar bark. She collects and prepares the bark and grasses herself, although she now has

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p.33.

<sup>72</sup> Cruikshank, J., 'Oral Traditions and Oral History: Reviewing Some Issues' *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 75, No 3, September 1994: pp403-418; quote p.410.

<sup>73</sup> Many of these articles viewed in the Royal BC Museum Ethnology Department, Victoria and the local history museum in Port Alberni are unnamed.

help collecting her resources. Recently she made use of her skills to design and weave a commissioned cedar bark cape and headgear for a young Nuu'Chah'Nulth girl to wear at her 'coming-of-age ceremony'. She is adamant she wants to teach what she was taught, the skills of weaving.<sup>74</sup>

Efforts to preserve Nuu'Chah'Nulth cultural heritage within a community context face many challenges. There is the need to collect, document and archive cultural information, but this must be tempered by the ability and will of these tradition bearers, the women, to share, use, re-shape, and transmit such information. Many artefacts were created and produced by women for men's use; for example, whaling hats. Cook refers to women making garments and weaving, using the word 'she' to denote or indicate it is a woman's job. He is meticulous in describing the woven artefacts saying: 'we have sometimes seen the whole process of their whale-fishery painted on the caps they wear', acknowledging the way people represent knowledge in a lasting way, and independently of what is recorded in their songs.<sup>75</sup> Cook continues: 'it is impossible, however, that we should have been able to observe the exact mode of their domestic life and employment, from a single visit (as the first was quite transitory) of a few hours.'<sup>76</sup>

Artefacts speak to how we as humans have evolved and survived: as a simple pestle and mortar shows us how people shaped their agricultural revolution, using food as a means of communion, so woven goods help us to understand the environment and experiences of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women. The nineteenth century obsession with collecting, coupled with power-seeking colonialism, created collections, both private and municipal. Common debates on ownership raises questions: to whom do the objects belong, where should the artefacts be housed? Issues of repatriation are complicated as are the circumstances under which the artefacts came to be where they now reside. As Neil MacGregor describes it, the objects are a means to tell history as 'one shared story,'<sup>77</sup> although remembering sensitivity to cultural difference is critical.<sup>78</sup> Examination of artefacts reveals information about their creators, the technologies of the time, social positions and practices, cultural norms, customs, design

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<sup>74</sup> Taken from interview notes with Delores Bayne, 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2010: p.1 of transcript; she is a Master Weaver, owning her designs. When Delores dies her weaving designs will be passed to another member of the family. Delores is also very keen to pass on her language skills as she is one of the few remaining Nuu'Chah'Nulth speakers. Lena Jumbo's interview also focuses on weaving, May 2010, Ahousaht.

<sup>75</sup> Cook, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, Book 1V, Chapter 3, p.327; excellent examples reside in the archives in Victoria.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., Book 1V, Chapter 3, p.319.

<sup>77</sup> Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum: his words were accessed in 'Issues & Artefacts at the British Museum' by Teresa Jacobelli at [activehistory.ca](http://activehistory.ca) posted on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

<sup>78</sup> See also: Bolton, S. (2009) 'Museums Taken to Task: Representing First Peoples at the McCord Museum of Canadian History' in Timpson, A.M. (Ed.)(2009) *First Nations, First Thoughts: The Impact of Indigenous Thought in Canada*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver: pp145-169.

techniques, and other valuable historical facts. These glimpses into the past are so useful in providing the context for museum professionals, anthropologists, and social historians to research diverse communities, adding to historical understanding about specific cultural groups, technical and social trends. NAGPRA<sup>79</sup> has helped in the United States but the question of ethics and ownership of artefacts, including photographs, is still questioned and debated in Canada.<sup>80</sup>

Artefacts transcend language barriers providing a source for research within oral-based societies where little written history is available; artefacts provide a window into the past, an approach to historical understanding reflecting the beliefs of both individual women and their communities, (un)consciously and (in)directly.<sup>81</sup> Artefacts are significant not only as functional objects but also as 'texts', offering a cultural message by drawing our attention to historical and cultural contexts, allowing women an active role in creating meaning and in shaping the world around them as the women are seen to interact with their environment rather than simply react to it, interacting through their weaving and basketry. For example, within Nuu'Chah'Nulth culture each family has a 'shawl' or 'curtain' telling their history.

They're important, they're the identity of the people of our chief, the shawl tells us which house we come from ... sometimes the chief keeps his own shawl but each individual has their own story, every individual has a shawl with their own history. I made one. It has my own story. ... I did this myself, I made my own shawl; it's made out of felt; the fabric is really thick, a thick warm blanket. [I wear the shawl] at potlatches. We have shawls, we wear shawls and a chief has a curtain [describing] what he does. A lot of them are whalers, they have thunderbirds ... wolves; they have seals so seal hunters tell part of the history. The shawls the chiefs wear tell our history.<sup>82</sup>

The significance of the natural environment portrayed in the shawls, and women's skills in weaving, basket making and food preparation suggests a dialogue between the concrete and spiritual realms of Nuu'Chah'Nulth life. The following recent post succinctly clarifies the

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<sup>79</sup> NAGPRA: The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act enacted in 16<sup>th</sup> November 1990 to address the rights of lineal descendants, Indian tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations to Native American cultural items.

<sup>80</sup> Discussed in depth at the Royal British Columbia Museum, Ethnography Department, April 2012 between Lorna Julian, Collection manager, Ethnology, at the Royal BC Museum, Victoria, and myself, April/May 2012; consider The Spirit Sings Exhibition at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary which rekindled this debate in Canada; see <http://rebeccanelson.com/canada.html>.

<sup>81</sup> Referenced in McQuire, R.H. & Paynter, R. (Eds.)(1991) *The Archaeology of Inequality*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford (Brown 1988:19).

<sup>82</sup> Genevieve's interview, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010, Nanaimo, explains the purpose of the shawls; p.4-5 of transcript; shawls were explained to me by Karen Duffek, Curator at the Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, April 2008.

meaning of artefacts within this context: 'Artefacts are tangible incarnations of social relationships embodying the attitudes and behaviour of the past.'<sup>83</sup>

A joint venture between the curator at the Museum of Anthropology<sup>84</sup> and a small group of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women has made it possible to match family names to artefacts, encouraging people to change attitudes and begin considering using museums as a tool to celebrate their history, in other words connecting communities to museums. This new approach offers valuable opportunities to understand more fully the women represented through artefacts and their community roles.<sup>85</sup> Since the emergence of social history in the 1960s and 1970s, public history venues, such as museums and libraries, have wrestled with the issue of expanding women's narratives to incorporate voices largely absent from historical accounts. Raising awareness of women's voices in the wider context of museums heralds opportunities for women to be heard, voices empowered by grassroots history projects that will contribute to women's narratives, challenging traditional approaches. The combination of correctly representing women, their artefacts, and explanatory narratives will give a voice to and greater understanding of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women.<sup>86</sup> As so many examples of Nuu'Chah'Nulth visual culture sit in museum collections many miles from the communities they mirror, it is necessary to consider who made them and why are they located in museums. The artefacts –baskets, capes, and hats– represent the economic potential of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women as well as their culture. How and why these objects came to be in museums is often vague, and the ways they have been classified reflect an Eurocentric approach, often erroneous. It is this persistent colonial legacy creating a path from 'primitive to civilised' that needs challenging as museums should be sensitive to the Aboriginal communities they are seeking to represent. Different types of baskets, each with their own history, are lodged in museums, and the women have detailed memories of traditional family baskets, weaving, and basket making using a variety of materials, sea grass, cedar bark, sedge and spruce roots, and

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<sup>83</sup> 'Tangible History: Artefacts as Gateways to the Past' by Krista McCracken referenced in Beaudry, M.C., Cook, L. & Mrozowski, S.A. *Artefacts & Active Voices: Material Culture as Social Discourse*, posted on October 26<sup>th</sup> 2011 in History & Everyday Life, Teaching History.

<sup>84</sup> The Museum of Anthropology is located at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

<sup>85</sup> Discussions with Ms Karen Duffek, Curator, Contemporary Visual Arts & Pacific Northwest at University of British Columbia, Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver, BC; April/May 2009; evidenced in the interviews rescheduled because two Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, mother and daughter, Kathy and Anne Robinson, were meeting Ms Duffek to discuss the problems of repatriation, representation and naming of artefacts.

<sup>86</sup> McCartney, L. 'Respecting First Nations Oral Histories: Copyright Complexities and Archiving Aboriginal Stories' in Timpson, A.M. (Ed.)(2009) *First Nations, First Thoughts: The Impact of Indigenous Thought in Canada*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver: p.77-96; Brown, J.S.H. & Vibert, E. (Eds.)(2003) *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Broadview Press, Canada.

birch.<sup>87</sup> So, including oral history recordings of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women talking about the creation of their artefacts or the stories connected with them will help museum visitors 'hear' the stories as opposed to just 'looking' at the artefacts.

Photographs provide another excellent source of historical information but it is necessary to be aware of possible misrepresentations and misunderstandings<sup>88</sup> as photographs are often staged, the people not named, reflecting a perspective Aboriginal people as primitive, their traditional culture and lifestyles disappearing. Un-named photographs of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women residing in archives still cause disquiet amongst the women.<sup>89</sup> Sensitive use of photographs by oral historians affords fascinating, sometimes spellbinding, interpretations from both the tellers, and the listeners.<sup>90</sup> Photographs can inspire researchers in historical interpretations by offering connections between the oral and the visual although how oral historians effectively use and understand photographs needs greater scrutiny. Exploring connections between oral history and photographs is challenging, moving beyond photographs as social documents and memory triggers towards photographs as a visual representation of an oral narrative, the stories unsettling the seemingly fixed meanings of the photographs themselves. Stories provide a view of how the world has been ordered, balanced, and settled; however, photographs can be seen as destabilising, and even subjugating First Nations if taken by colonial photographers or trophy hunters. It is the very existence of photographs, their misrepresentation of First Nation life, and the use to which they have been put in colonial and capitalist ventures that is at the heart of Aboriginal protest against museums.

## Oral History

In recent years, interest in oral history as a valuable contributor to the historical record has increased dramatically. Oral history is used as a methodology in many different disciplines (sociology, anthropology, psychology, history) to retrieve 'hidden voices' of previously unheard

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<sup>87</sup> Interviews with Anne and Kathy Robinson; see Bolton, S. 'Museums Taken to Task: Representing First Peoples at the McCord Museum of Canadian History' in Timpson, A.M. (Ed.) *First Nations, First Thoughts*: p145-169; Task Force on Museums and First Peoples (1992) *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships between Museums and First Peoples*, Canadian Museums Association and Assembly of First Nations, Ottawa.

<sup>88</sup> Gidley, M. (Ed.) (1994) *Representing Others: White Views of Indigenous Peoples*, University of Exeter Press, UK; Gidley, M. (2000) *Edward S. Curtis and the North American Indian Incorporated*, Cambridge University Press; King, Thomas (2003) *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative*, House of Anansi Press Inc., Toronto; Francis, D. (2004) *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*, Arsenal Pulp Press, Vancouver, BC; Kirk, R. *Tradition and Change*; Clifford, J. *Writing Culture*.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Genevieve, May 2010 in Nanaimo; see chapter 5 for detail.

<sup>90</sup> Freund, A. & Thomson, A. (Eds.) (2011) *Oral History and Photography*, Palgrave Studies in Oral History, Palgrave Macmillan, London: An excellent book that, through a variety of papers, allow the voices of those who have been hidden from history an opportunity to be heard.

groups of people, the working class in England, indigenous groups worldwide, immigrants in various countries, women's groups worldwide who have long been invisible in history and society. Oral history complements existing research as it uncovers new dimensions of Aboriginal history, providing a forum for tracing women's lives and the role they play in history.<sup>91</sup> Aboriginal people were and are peoples of words their histories evolving from a vast storehouse of oral traditions, and the women were neither wordless nor illiterate in the context of their cultural and linguistic roots. In Canada, their words, and the words of their brothers and other family members, were politically negated as they were forbidden to speak their Nuuchah'Nulth language in residential school.<sup>92</sup>

Using oral histories as evidence became acceptable when the court case of *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*, 1997,<sup>93</sup> forced western legal systems to reconsider the validity and significance of oral traditions in First Nation society, causing the Canadian legal system to adjust to this reality. This case has important implications for Canadian history and for the idea of history itself as stories hold information associated with women's role, territorial stewardship, and generational responsibilities amongst others. First Nations life is maintained and remembered through storytelling, and placing family events into historical contexts adds to what is already known.<sup>94</sup> When talking about her grandmother, Ina said:

My perception of my grandmother; she wasn't a very strong woman but, in a sense, she was in her quietness she was strong. When she met my grandfather she made a marriage contract right then and there. And this is quite a while ago you know. ... He didn't speak the same language but he wanted to marry her and while they were in the canoe she told him 'I will come with you but I want my own house ... I don't want to live with your family'. At that time people lived together in one house. She told him 'I also want to visit, to go see, to meet with my family once a year.' He agreed. Every year she went down to the States and met her family there. She had her own house and so in that sense I can see she was strong. She knew what she wanted. My mum said she was always talking for people ... she was an organiser, she spoke up for her sisters ... She was not from Vancouver Island and she came with some very different ideas; she had a garden and chickens. She was very independent; she made money by

<sup>91</sup> Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies (Journal for Gender Studies), special issue on the use of oral history in gender studies; one aspect focuses on the 'hidden voices' of women; published 21<sup>st</sup> June 2012.

<sup>92</sup> Consider Memmi's portrait of *The Colonised and the Coloniser* in Tunisia which reveals a striking similarity to the Aboriginal people and the colonisers of Canada. Nuuchah'Nulth women appropriated English without abandoning their Nuuchah'Nulth language.

<sup>93</sup> *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*, December 11<sup>th</sup> 1997; the court gave great weight to oral history; the Supreme Court of Canada ruled oral testimony carries the same weight as written evidence, a milestone; of oral history the court said oral history was/is tangential to the ultimate purpose of the fact-finding process at trial – the determination of the *historical* truth': Library of Parliament/ Bibliotheque du Parlement; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delgamuukw\\_v.British\\_Columbia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delgamuukw_v.British_Columbia); <http://www.parl.gc.ca/content/LOP/ResearchPublications/bp459-e.htm>.

<sup>94</sup> Kovach, M. (2010) *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto: see chapter on 'Story as Indigenous Methodology', pp94-108.

knitting hats and sweaters. She sold them all over the place and from about May till September she would go down to the States and follow the crops: strawberries, raspberries, cherries and apples and hops; she would make money doing that.<sup>95</sup> It is possible to place this story within a time context as the detail provides us, the reader, with many clues: berry picking in the States, travelling by canoe, early waged economies, introducing the skills of knitting adding to their proficiency in weaving, the introduction of gardens and chickens into their lives, all situate the story around the 1920s. However, the story also quietly demonstrates the power and strengths of women: setting her own agenda in terms of when and where to travel, having her own house, introducing new economies and skills through the development of gardens and livestock, involvement in waged-work. Another extract shows further insightful evidence concerning the importance of how history is kept alive through storytelling with descriptions of cooking sockeye salmon in barbeque pits.

There is a barbeque pit in Duncan where they do the barbequing; I went to watch and my son took one minute to put the fish on the stick ... So from my great-grandma and my grandmother and my mother are all teaching me this method and I've taught my sons and my daughters. This is so awesome how they learned from me; I find it really awesome how my grandmother and great-grandmother taught me. It's seven generations now because there are great-grandkids.<sup>96</sup>

In a matter of a few words, this story crosses time boundaries so using clues from the stories alerts us to the historical timescale. Genevieve's great-grandmother had been born towards the end of the nineteenth century, dying in the 1970s aged 104; Genevieve admitted her own children had known their great-grandmother and listened to her stories.

These brief excerpts give us a wealth of detail about Nuu'Chah'Nulth women's life at the beginning of the twentieth century: the strength of women to dictate the benefits for their families; women travelling to the States not just to socialise but to engage in wage economies; making goods for sale; sharing and learning new skills; the joining of different bands through marriage; the acceptance of non-Nuu'Chah'Nulth speakers into their families; alternative methods of travel, and, for women especially, the freedom to travel and cross international boundaries with ease. The second excerpt continues, telling of her grandmother's skills in fishing, preserving food, making 'sure there was enough of everything to survive through the winter.'<sup>97</sup> Both stories quietly demonstrate the importance of listening to oral histories through the medium of storytelling, filling gaps in and adding new knowledge to history.

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<sup>95</sup> Interview with Ina, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: pp3-4 of transcript.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with Genevieve, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010: pp9-10 of transcript; she describes the weaving skills of her great-grandmother and grandmother who were master weavers.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p.5.



History is thus an altered or changed concept once it enters the lived experience of telling a story, bringing the past into a relationship with the present. In this respect, the story-telling aspect of history-making incorporates myth and family history, their dances and songs which echo their past, transcending generations, and giving tribal memories new meanings. These narratives are not necessarily in chronological order but offer rich opportunities for oral historians, the clues in the stories alerting us to historical time-scales.<sup>98</sup> Traditionally the women come from an oral society so their responses develop into stories of everyday social and cultural instances, how history has influenced the changes experienced within their lives, leading to a richer understanding of who they are, how they arrived at this point, and where they are going. One delightful instance is the communal tap story telling us so much about the community life of Nu'u'Chah'Nulth women in the 1950s, how lives were ordered despite the lack of electricity and water.

For water we went to a community tap. ... We could hear women talking ... hear all the gossip from the community happenings; if you were really quiet you would hear the women ... telling stories.<sup>99</sup>

It is possible to consider where, within the historical time frame, to place this story. These women grew up in isolated communities, only abandoning them and moving to Port Alberni after the 1964 tsunami, so the events described were part of 1950s community life. Through the narrative you realise these daily activities had been central to their lives for many generations, a natural part of community life.

Oral history was the first kind of history as old as history itself enabling people to hold onto and sustain their culture, traditions and language across generations through stories, dances, songs and ceremonies. Maybe the challenge of oral history lies in the social purpose of history; why events and memories need recording, filling the gaps of documented history, giving greater understanding to historical happenings and ultimately providing knowledge of a past that relates directly with the present and subsequently into the future, augmenting what is already known.<sup>100</sup> Memories are living histories. An African proverb 'every old man that dies is a library that burns',<sup>101</sup> suggests to the oral historian the need to capture memories of

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<sup>98</sup> Narrative is the 'primary form by which human experience is made meaningful' i.e. telling a story: in Polkinghorne, D. (1988) *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences*, State University of New York (SUNY) Press, Albany, NY: p.1.

<sup>99</sup> Interview with Charlotte, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.8 of transcript; these women were in their 60s so they were referring to the early 1950s; full quote Chapter 7, fn768.

<sup>100</sup> Armitage, S., Hart, P. & Weathermon, K. (Eds.)(2002) *Women's Oral History: the Frontier Reader*, Frontiers Publishing Inc., University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln; Abrams, Lynn *Oral History Theory*; Perks, R. & Thomson, A. (Eds.) *The Oral History Reader*.

<sup>101</sup> Amadou Hampate Ba is credited with coining this phrase; Referenced in the Introduction to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of Perks, R. & Thomson, A. (Eds.) *The Oral History Reader*, p.ix; see also <http://people.africadatabase.org/en/profile/1029.html>; good examples of Aboriginal oral histories

people's lives, of women's lives, of events before memories disappear, and all that is left is the historical account based on legislation, and the historian's personal interpretation.

I recently came across the following words: 'Sing it Out, Shout it Out, Say it Out Loud: Giving Voice through Oral History', a phrase that succinctly sums up the meaning of oral history, giving time and space for women to tell their life stories.

Voices raised in song, in anger, in celebration, in protest, in joy, in memoriam – words gathered by oral historians in the cause of their work, and who, over the years have used the methodology of oral history to give voice to many different people from diverse communities.<sup>102</sup>

Oral history makes a difference by gathering-up these disparate voices, women's voices, and making them accessible to a wide audience, linking the past, present, and future, continuity and discontinuity. Listening to Nuuch'Chah'Nulth women gives direct access to a different cultural universe. Kathleen Donovan<sup>103</sup> explores issues of voice and the centrality of the oral tradition in great depth, considering identity, interaction between cultures and women, misinterpretations of Aboriginal women's lives. In doing so, she acknowledges the pioneering works of Paula Gunn Allen,<sup>104</sup> who provides invaluable discussion of oral traditions and cultural stories, emphasising harmony and balance, key threads within this thesis. Whilst suggesting little has been written exploring links between these ideas, Donovan reminds us the Western privilege of writing texts deflects attention away from oral tradition's 'potent form of creativity', as through stories, women's lives are enriched.<sup>105</sup>

So oral history can be used in a number of ways: to inform the future by preserving the past, to ensure sustainability and regeneration through reclaiming and reinterpretation, appreciating cultural change, and enabling understanding between cultures and generations. With the growing popularity of oral history within local community settings oral history becomes an effective, far reaching tool in encouraging and improving community engagement and participation towards reaffirming cultural identity.

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include: Goodman, L.J. & Swan, H. (2002) *Singing the Songs of My Ancestors: The Life and Music of Helma Swan, Makah Elder*, University of Oklahoma Press; Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation & Smith, S. (2009) *People of the Lakes: Stories of our Van Tat Gwich'in Elders/ Googwandak Nakhwach'anjoo Van Tat Gwich'in*, The University of Alberta Press; Remy-Sawyer, T. (2009) *Living in Two Worlds: A Gwich'in Woman Tells her True Story*, Trafford Publishing, Vancouver; Cruikshank, J. in collaboration with Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith, & Annie Neal (1990) *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Native Elders*, University of Nebraska Press; Blackman, M. B. (1992) *During My Lifetime: Florence Edenshaw Davidson, a Haida Woman*, University of Washington Press.

<sup>102</sup> The quote advertises a conference, the annual meeting of the Oral History Association (OHA) in Cleveland, Ohio, January, 2012, called 'Sing it out, Shout it out loud: Giving Voice through Oral History'.

<sup>103</sup> Donovan, Kathleen M. (1998) *Feminist Readings of Native American Literature: Coming to Voice*, The University of Arizona Press, Tucson, AZ; hooks, b. (1989) *talking back* South End Press, Boston.

<sup>104</sup> Allen, Paula Gunn *The Sacred Hoop*.

<sup>105</sup> Donovan, K. *Feminist Readings*, p.10.

Oral history challenges established practices and academics' understanding of history in new and different ways: learning the skills required to document and make sense of recorded interviews; understanding the narratives of memory and what narratives have to offer additionally to history; filling gaps left in historical records and accounts. More importantly, oral history requires the historian to speak to people rather than reading a manuscript. This transforms the practice of recording and understanding history as women not only recall facts of the past but will also introduce their own interpretations of that past providing a source of new information. Women are empowered through the processes of remembering and reinterpreting their recent lived-through events, a particularly influential approach in the reconciliation process regarding residential schooling of First Nation people. Oral history can, therefore, be used as the means to reflect upon the lives and voices of the women. Through the process of oral history individual women recount personal histories, how their histories relate to and interconnect with the present, relying on memory as their source of history.<sup>106</sup> Historians are wary of memory as a historical source of evidence believing it challenges historical orthodoxies and research methodologies; they question the reliability of memory, potential concerns of the interview relationship and thus the process of interpretation of women's lives both past and present. However, the distinctive contribution of oral history to historical understanding is important, filling gaps in historical records, assisting interpretation and understanding social change.

Oral histories and narratives go beyond the printed word becoming documents that move and speak to the reader. If we accept the premise academia has a great deal to learn from women's histories, how that knowledge is processed is critical, and listening to what the women have to say is even more important. Listening without instant interpretation is not without its difficulties, so learning to listen and hearing what women say is essential. The listener needs to shed pre-conceived or culturally determined ways of seeing and knowing, and in this respect, the oral historian is like an enlightened ethnographer, someone like Edward Sapir who adopted a self-reflective response to understanding other cultures, a dialogue between the past and the present.<sup>107</sup> First Nations oral traditions are their cultural tool, their way of knowing and understanding themselves and others, a way of demonstrating the Aboriginal worldview, the complexity and diversity of Aboriginal life. Jerome Bruner

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<sup>106</sup> Timpson, Annis May (Ed.) (2009) *First Nations, First Thoughts*; Valaskakis, G.G., Stout, M.D., & Guimond, E. *Restoring the Balance*.

<sup>107</sup> Sapir, E. & Swadesh, M. (1939) *Nootka texts: Tales & Ethnological Narratives with Grammatical Notes & Lexical Materials*, The Linguistic Society of America, University of Yale; see also The Sapir-Thomas Nootka Texts written down circa 1910-1923: Part 11, The Whaling Indians and Part 12, The Origin of the Wolf Ritual.

fervently believed the narrative structure of our life experiences play a central role in our well-being, and although he did not directly refer to the oral societies of the First Nations, his comments relate to their way of life:

... ways of telling and the ways of conceptualising that go with narrative forms become so habitual that they finally become recipes for structuring experience itself, for laying down routes into memory, for not only guiding the life narrative up to the present but directing it into the future.<sup>108</sup>

Bruner's arguments are strengthened by his belief the life you lead cannot be separated from the life as told: 'a life is not 'how it was' but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold.'<sup>109</sup> His view of life epitomises Nuu'Chah'Nulth society or, at best, is a compromise between the narrative recounted by the women, and the questions asked, balancing the women's responses and stories within a structure of prompts and reflective questioning.<sup>110</sup> Sharing stories resonates with many Nuu'Chah'Nulth values, and acknowledging the strengths of oral traditions advances Aboriginal knowledge, restoring it to its own rightful place as the central and fundamental ingredient of the whole community. Bruner's ideas suggest storytellers take meaning from the historical circumstances that have given shape and expression to Nuu'Chah'Nulth culture.<sup>111</sup> Oral histories present a unique way of sharing the knowledge and experiences contributing to the history of Nuu'Chah'Nulth society, a powerful tool for reflection, recollection and reflexivity, tracing paths through the lives of the women. It is the way in which we know, remember and understand, a universal mirror showing the 'truth' about ourselves, who and why we are.<sup>112</sup>

Oral history is a rapidly growing research methodology. Aboriginal oral histories and legal parameters are constantly reconsidered and reassessed, addressing the different motivations for and uses of oral histories in academic settings.<sup>113</sup> As the interview is at the centre of oral history methodology, the role of the researcher in generating and interpreting First Nations oral history evidence is an abiding issue of debate.

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<sup>108</sup> Bruner, Jerome S. (1987) *Life as Narrative* Social Research, 54: 11-32: p.31.

<sup>109</sup> Bruner, J.S. *Life as Narrative*.

<sup>110</sup> Jochelovitch, S. & Bauer, M. (2000) 'Narrative Interviewing' in Bauer, M. & Gaskell, G. (Eds.) *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image, and Sound*, Sage Publications, London: pp57-74; Jochelovitch & Bauer appear inflexible in their thinking believing that there should be no interruption, in other words, a continuous monologue.

<sup>111</sup> Bruner, J. S. (1990) *Acts of Meaning*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>112</sup> The Personal Narratives Group (Eds.)(1989) *Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory & Personal Narratives*, Indiana University Press, pp1-35; Livo, N.J. & Rietz, S.A. (1988) *Storytelling Folklore Sourcebook*, Libraries Unlimited Inc., Westport, CT; a story is built into human memory, a way of thinking, a primary organiser of information and ideas, the soul of a culture, the consciousness of a people (1986:2-4).

<sup>113</sup> Canadian Ethics document 2010; Trimble, C., Sommer, Barbara V. & Quinlan, Mary K. (2008) *The American Oral History Manual: Making Many Voices Heard*, Left Coast Press, California.

## So why Interview?

Interviews are inherently a flexible approach to acquiring knowledge; open-ended questioning is commonly used within a historical field, and the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee is interactive allowing clarification as well as exploration of ideas as they arise.<sup>114</sup> Interviewing these women about the events of their past for the purpose of historical reconstruction will transform how contemporary history is viewed, how previous interpretations and perspectives of history need re-thinking, how their information challenges existing ideas. Women's stories challenge existing standards and concepts as ideas have been impoverished by a history of male interpretation of female experiences. More importantly, these new contributions are from women who have rarely spoken about their lives to a white interviewer.<sup>115</sup> Encouraging the women to tell their life-stories in their own words was paramount, so the emphasis and words used in the questioning process is critical. Interviews allow women to reflect upon the meaning of those experiences, how they understand themselves within the context of their world, their values, beliefs and principles.

Interviewing gives Nuu'Chah'Nulth women the chance to narrate life experiences, offer their interpretations of historical events, how these momentous episodes challenged and altered their lives. Interviewing empowers the women through the process of remembering and re-interpretation, giving them time to reflect upon and explore ideas; in particular, the recent lived-through events of the reconciliation process in regard to residential schooling, gives value to women's voices.<sup>116</sup> Oral history represents the uniqueness of remembered lives while, at the same time, making sense of a common past. One of the strengths of interviewing is the ability to directly access what happened in women's lives, what women have done, how they have been affected by events, and for assessing women's attitudes and values which cannot be observed by other means.<sup>117</sup>

Developing a rapport with Nuu'Chah'Nulth women was essential in enabling their thoughts, reminiscences, and story-telling to surface. Drawing on their knowledge to improve my own understanding of Nuu'Chah'Nulth history and tradition was paramount. The benefits of in-depth qualitative research, the significance of life-histories, of autobiographical methods and of reminiscence are valued, so the role women played in this process gave me greater

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<sup>114</sup> Gillham, B. (2005) *Research Interviewing: the Range of Techniques*, Open University Press, UK.

<sup>115</sup> Rowbotham, S. (1973) *Hidden from History*, Pluto, London; documentation includes archives, on-line databases, museum exhibits, theatre performances, documentaries, radio broadcasts, podcasts, blogs.

<sup>116</sup> The interview process has also been particularly influential in reflexivity noted earlier.

<sup>117</sup> Silverman, D. (2006) *Interpreting Qualitative Data, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*, Sage Publications, London.

understanding of their world.<sup>118</sup> Open-ended questioning allows for digressions, a considered response to their thoughts, interpretations of historical, social, and personal events, and appreciation of lived experience. Bridget Byrne suggests, quite rightly, qualitative interviewing, when it is done well, will achieve a level of depth, complexity and interest.<sup>119</sup>

Qualitative interviewing has been particularly attractive to researchers who want to explore voices and experiences which they believe have been ignored, misrepresented, or suppressed in the past.<sup>120</sup>

Interviews are not conducted 'in a historic-socio-cultural vacuum', but are 'embedded' in broader historical contexts,<sup>121</sup> gaining access to a different cultural universe. Descriptions of Nu'u'Chah'Nulth social life from a female viewpoint adds new meaning as learning about these neglected but necessary life activities improves our understanding of their communities.

The interviews were daunting but so enjoyable, exciting, and so informative. Rapley<sup>122</sup> asserts no special interviewing skills are required except to understand the importance of interactions between women, the sensitivity needed to appreciate their experiences, shared confidences, and to be prepared to listen to new ideas and thinking. Byrne,<sup>123</sup> though, believes effective skills are needed to complete a potentially enriching interview, to be able to recognise important developments and changes that arise. Maybe a combination is the most effective as the interview is a partnership between two women, neither is passive. I needed to appreciate when to interrupt, in which context, and how often, to be active in the discussion but not monopolise the conversation, to allow necessary silences, one-word replies, and meaningful conversations.<sup>124</sup> More importantly, I needed to be aware for some women English was their second language, a language learned in residential school.<sup>125</sup>

Kitzinger and Rapley<sup>126</sup> suggest interviews reveal many unexpected views and opinions, not just the research topic so it is important to listen. The social environment,

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<sup>118</sup> Maynard, M., Afshar, H., Franks, M. & Wray, S. (Eds.) (2008) *Women in Later Life: Exploring 'Race' and Ethnicity*, Open University Press, UK; Merrill, B. & West, L. (2009) *Using Biographical Methods in Social Research*, Sage Publications Ltd., London; Tonkin, E. (1995) *Narrating our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History*, (Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture, No. 22), Cambridge University Press, UK.

<sup>119</sup> Byrne, B. (2004) 'Qualitative Interviewing' in Seale, C. (Ed.) *Researching Society and Culture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Sage Publications, London: pp179-192.

<sup>120</sup> Byrne, B. *Qualitative Interviewing*: p.182.

<sup>121</sup> Rapley, T. (2004) 'Interviews' in Seale, C., Gobo, G., Gubrium, J. & Silverman, D. (Eds.) *Qualitative Research Practice*, Sage Publications, London: pp15-33:26.

<sup>122</sup> Rapley, T. *Interviews*: pp15-33.

<sup>123</sup> Byrne, B. *Qualitative Interviewing*: pp179-192.

<sup>124</sup> Rapley, T. *Interviews*; Byrne, B. *Qualitative Interviewing*.

<sup>125</sup> Dr Michelle Corfield had raised the issue of language. There are times when older women use Nu'u'Chah'Nulth rather than English. The few times both languages were used added to the interview rather than detracted from it; see Lena's interview.

<sup>126</sup> Kitzinger, C. (2004) 'Feminist Approaches' in C. Seale, G. Gobo, J. Gubrium and D. Silverman (Eds.) *Qualitative Research Practice*, Sage Publications, London: pp125-140; Rapley, T. *Interviews*: pp15-33.

atmosphere, interactions between women, the questions, and the sensitivity required in understanding women's experiences, even shared confidences are all integral to the process of encouraging women to talk. A non-competitive atmosphere without interruption helps women explore the influences in their lives; and open-questions allow time for reflection in deciding which past experiences are central to their life-stories, what memories are to be shared. The interview with Anne is a good example. When her husband arrived unexpectedly it quickly became very apparent the interview would not continue with a man present so, as we were going to her home for lunch, we left the community hall and resumed the interview later just before we sat down for lunch. Anne had set her own terms for the interview, she had empowered herself, explaining later, conditions for talking had to be correct; it was not Nu'u'Chah'Nulth protocol for women to talk about women's issues in front of men. Education, the teaching of young girls, and the passing of traditionally female knowledge are all handled by grandmothers, aunts, and other elder women.<sup>127</sup>

The unique role of oral history is understanding locality so it is important to pay attention to the specifics of place when listening to women speak, noting the differences between interviewing in the privacy of home and the openness of community halls. Home offers freedom of speech, discretion and disclosure, whereas conducting interviews in the wider space of a community hall meant being overheard, noise disruption, and a distinct lack of confidentiality.<sup>128</sup> The listening environment should be welcoming for all women; women need to know they can talk in confidence. If this is not the case, difference between women from diverse cultures is perpetuated negatively, engendering feelings of inadequacy. The strengths of women's voices should be heard. Opportunities for gaining confidence in speaking, to develop the skills to participate effectively in the treaty-making processes were reasons community workshops were set up in isolated Nu'u'Chah'Nulth communities. During the spring of 2010, I was present at the inaugural meeting in Zeballos, and saw first-hand the respect given to women who were readily offered the freedom and time to talk, and to be listened to. For me, the workshops provided a valuable opportunity to be part of this procedure, to listen to discussions, to share perceptions and understandings of treaty processes, to hear about skills women believed necessary for community participation and

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<sup>127</sup> Evidenced in interview with Anne Robinson, May 2009: p9 of transcript; we had been talking about being respectful and how to listen to people, listening with their whole body, comparing and discussing the changes evident since residential schooling when interruption to girls' teaching occurred. It was an amazing interview giving me the opportunity to be welcomed into their home, to prepare and eat lunch together and talk.

<sup>128</sup> Of the thirteen interviews five were carried out in the privacy of their homes and eight in tribal offices or community halls.

development. I was an outsider in these meetings but was warmly welcomed to join their discussions and, more importantly, to take notes.<sup>129</sup>

Hesitancy in talking to Europeans is embedded in their culture, so I presented a dilemma for these women: whether or not to participate in the interviews. During the process of negotiating access, some women declined to speak to me, some were very willing. Two women<sup>130</sup> initially said they were unavailable, giving as their reason involvement in discussions concerning the repatriation and labelling of artefacts at the Museum of Anthropology. However, on returning to the island, one sent a text requesting the opportunity to speak with me, a tremendous breakthrough in communication and one I was very appreciative of and excited about.<sup>131</sup> I realised I was not perceived to be a threat.

Women in all cultures talk to one another. So who speaks, and how, and under what circumstances, what is said and by whom are important considerations. bell hooks, in her book *Talking Back*, suggests talking amongst women is 'especially relevant for groups of women who have previously never had a public voice, women who are speaking ... for the first time. ... all women have something meaningful to say,' and I believe Nuu'Chah'Nulth women have a wealth of information to share.<sup>132</sup> The interviews gave these women opportunities to engage in talk intricately connected to their culture, communities and lives, their past, present, and future. The depth and breadth of their stories lead us into areas hitherto not considered or shared. The women need ownership of the stories they shared with me, raising the question of anonymity. Balance is necessary so stories can be told and heard in confidence.

The language women use is richer when they have time to explain and clarify so 'we must learn to help women to tell their own stories as fully, completely, and honestly as they desire.'<sup>133</sup> Carefully listening to women allows for the possibility of seeing and understanding how traditional social behaviours of women's lives are conceptualised, as well as identifying earlier significant historical omissions in understanding women's lives from a female and Aboriginal perspective. By listening to the recordings whilst transcribing alerts us to parts of stories missed during the interview, so a more complete picture of women's lives emerges. Creating the transcripts encouraged me to listen meticulously to the original recording for

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<sup>129</sup> Reasons for my attendance was explained and accepted; the people were happy for me to be there, to watch, listen, and take notes.

<sup>130</sup> Kathy and Anne Robinson, mother and daughter, are from an extended and influential Nuu'Chah'Nulth family.

<sup>131</sup> It transpired word about me had spread; I was ok, a lady who 'bumbled around' and it was alright and very easy to talk to me, I was not perceived to be a threat.

<sup>132</sup> bell hooks (1989) *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*, South End Press, Boston: p.12.

<sup>133</sup> Nielson, J.M. (Ed.)(1990) *Feminist Research Methods: Exemplary Readings in the Social Sciences*, Westview Press Inc., Boulder, Colorado, US: p.101.



sense and meaning. It is suggested the only accurate record is the original recording as any transcripts are mediated through my own understandings. The recording captures something missing from a transcript – how the person felt, what she thought about experiences, events, place or time. Transcripts cannot convey body language, eye contact; it is also hard to note intonation, pitch, tonality, in essence the person. The spoken word is converted to words on a page. This debate was recently aired on an internet oral history discussion site.<sup>134</sup> 'Is the recording or the transcript the official record of the interview as accuracy and editing of the transcript can vary widely? Is it an argument over privileging the spoken or written word? Should researchers be forced to return to the original recording and hear the voices for themselves rather than accepting a transcription estimate of what was said?' The debate, 'original recording vs. transcript', drew responses from around the world. However, although there was agreement about the importance of the recordings, of listening to people talk, the value of transcript could not be underestimated. The following comments illustrate the debate about peoples' belief in and importance of these issues.

We wanted people to share in the joyous experience of listening to someone tell their stories, to get away from the western emphasis on the written word. Part of the emphasis in oral history is the shared conversation, and by listening to a recording you have a chance to recreate that experience. You miss all the personal speaking style, inflection, etc., with just the transcript.<sup>135</sup>

Every aspect of the ways participants 'set the stage' for an interview is, potentially, part of the retelling – where we meet, who else is or isn't there, how long we meet, what may or may not be on the kitchen table? Most of these aspects are not in any recording of the interview. ... So we are left with the realization that we are always dealing with, at best, suggestive approximations of the 'real' interview which is always more multi-faceted than anything recoded, and so our observational and interpretative skills remain indispensable.<sup>136</sup>

The transcript is useful, but the recording of the human voice can let voice speak beyond illness and death.<sup>137</sup>

A final comment from Ron Grele: 'What is interesting is that oral history is still posing problems for traditional ways of doing and thinking about history.'<sup>138</sup> He raised the debate further when

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<sup>134</sup> Original Recording vs. Transcript, an internet LISTSERVE discussion, 4<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> March 2012; a series of discussion examples; [H-ORALHIST@H-NET.MSU.EDU](mailto:H-ORALHIST@H-NET.MSU.EDU).

<sup>135</sup> *Original Recordings vs. Transcripts*: 15<sup>th</sup> March 2012, Karen Brewster in Alaska, part of Project Jukebox at Fairbanks University, Alaska; this project now has a new director, Ms Lesley McCartney, oral historian, and Assistant Professor at Fairbanks University.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 14<sup>th</sup> March 2012, Henry Greenspan, Program in Social Theory and Practice, University of Michigan.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 14<sup>th</sup> March 2012; Jane Robinette, Iowa Women Artists Oral History Project.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 13<sup>th</sup> March 2012; Ron Grele, oral historian, Columbia University; see 'Re: Editing by Interviewee', 7<sup>th</sup> April 1998, in H-NET/OHA Discussion List on Oral History, [h-oralhist@h-net.msu.edu](mailto:h-oralhist@h-net.msu.edu),

he said a historian interprets facts and data; however, when you narrate or recount your history, you are already interpreting history, your history.<sup>139</sup> Also aired was the issue of the validity and similarity of the transcript and the recording as discrepancies between the two easily arise.

In most cases a recording is made, a transcript of the conversation is created, that transcript is sent back to the interviewee to edit and correct, a new copy is made thus the tape recording and the transcript do not say the same thing.<sup>140</sup>

Similar sentiments are echoed by Karen Brewster: 'if a transcript has been reviewed by the narrator and edited then it can no longer be considered a primary source document', alerting us to the worrying concern of distortion of data, misreading narrative. She continues: 'The transcript and recording will no longer match' prompting us to remember 'the recording is what you'd have to go back to, to see the source unaltered.' Her final comments remind us 'as keepers of our past it is our responsibility to preserve as much as we can.'<sup>141</sup> My transcripts were returned to the women for scrutiny, to ensure they were comfortable with my 'version', my understanding of the interview. I transcribed their words verbatim, keeping as close to the original narratives. As nobody raised any queries, I can only think the women were happy with the transcript outcomes.<sup>142</sup>

A final consideration involves how I was to be presented:<sup>143</sup> as a researcher, as a woman interviewing women or as the humble learner or a combination of all three.<sup>144</sup> By working within their culture, I become the 'humble learner', honoured to be invited to talk with and listen to them as gaining trust and developing a rapport was important to the success of this project. The interview was a journey of discovery giving responsibility to the women to communicate their worldviews, to construct meaning for themselves in recounting their histories, to help shape and share their narratives, and thus, to engage in interactive re-telling of events and feelings, personal and collective: women talking to women.

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archived at [www.msu.edu/logs](http://www.msu.edu/logs); former director of the Oral History Research Office, past President of the Oral History Association, lectures on oral history and the nature of historical consciousness.

<sup>139</sup> Ron Grele speaking at Columbia University, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2010.

<sup>140</sup> Ron Grele, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

<sup>141</sup> Karen Brewster, Research Associate, UAF Oral History Program; Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2012, [H-ORALHIST@H-NET.MSU.EDU](mailto:ORALHIST@H-NET.MSU.EDU).

<sup>142</sup> Emails were also involved in this dialogue. These are a primary source of information and, although providing possible relevant information, emails will lack some of the nuances a voice transmits.

<sup>143</sup> A short summary introducing myself and the nature of the research was given to each woman prior to being interviewed. Time was allowed for them to read the script and ask questions: these included their rights to review transcripts, clarification of issues, and the intended audience for their data.

<sup>144</sup> Fontana, A. & Frey, J. (2000) 'The Interview: from structured questions to negotiated text' in Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA: pp645-672.

The benefits of oral history are its importance and uniqueness as a historical resource providing access to history in a way that appeals not just to the professional oral historian but also to historians. Oral history fosters relationships between people from different cultures, socio-economic groups, inter-generational dialogue and communication. All too often First Nations research is conducted by outsiders who have 'dissected, labelled and dehumanised Indigenous people.'<sup>145</sup> So much research has *been* generated but little has been defined or owned by the people themselves: they need greater ownership of their history. Listening to their stories and finding ways of ensuring those accounts matter is part of the process as narratives tell of their past, present, and future, tracing paths through personal histories. An outcome for women is their capacity to reflect on change, the causes of those changes, and how the women and their families have been affected.<sup>146</sup> As the experience of sharing stories is an important element in understanding how women build strength through the circle of knowledge, so interviews are a particularly powerful medium for transferring that wisdom.

It has been said that oral history is 'ideally suited to the purposes of feminist inquiry.'<sup>147</sup> Women are the experts when talking about and discussing women's behaviour, their lives and themselves, so interviewing provides an excellent mechanism for women to speak for themselves, to reveal hidden realities, new experiences and perspectives that challenge existing records and accounts, casting doubt on established theories, and furthering our understanding of the past and of women's role in that past. Women tell other women what they did instead of what others thought they did or should have done, so conducting oral histories through interview probably only skims the surface of women's lives as women have more to say than one realises. Exploration of women's distinctive experiences, so different to men's experiences, is essential in restoring equilibrium in historical records. As Neilson says:

... women's perspectives were not absent simply as a result of oversight but had been suppressed, trivialised, ignored, or reduced to the status of gossip and folk wisdom by dominant research traditions institutionalised in academic settings.<sup>148</sup>

Academic discourse has, over the years, distorted and made invisible women's real activities, to women as well as men. For example, dismissing housework as not real work is erroneous as, for many women housework is not only a personal domestic activity but also an economic

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<sup>145</sup> Martin, K. (2001) *Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being, Ways of Doing: Developing a Theoretical Framework and Methods for Indigenous and Indigenist Research*. Retrieved from [www.aiatsis.gov.au/rsrch/conf2001](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/rsrch/conf2001); see also Martin, K. referenced in Dunbar, C. (2001) 'Critical Race Theories & Indigenous Methodologies' in Denzin, N., Lincoln, Y. & Smith, L.T. (2008) *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, Sage Publications Inc., Thousand Oaks, California: p91.

<sup>146</sup> Interview evidence, various; Dunbar, C. *Critical Race Theories*.

<sup>147</sup> Nielsen, J.M. (Ed.)(1990) *Feminist Research Methods: Exemplary Readings in the Social Sciences*, Westview Press Inc., Boulder, Colorado, US: p.94.

<sup>148</sup> Nielsen, J.M. *Feminist Research Methods*: p.96.

occupation, often a crucial part of the waged-economy. In order to understand more fully women's role in society, it is necessary to realise women's responsibility may not always be reflected in what they do, how they act, and what they think; in other words a holistic approach to research on women's lives is necessary. Oral histories are more than simply gathering accounts and stories from women, it is the conclusions drawn from these accounts that provide deeper insights of women's experiences, their role in history and place in society. Oral history affords us a unique opportunity to question, to find answers and gain knowledge.

## **Feminist Methodologies**

Mary Maynard draws attention to the neglect in addressing the positive portrayal of the role of older women in society, the consideration of or extent to which cultural diversity has been addressed, or omitted, and suggests researchers need to consider the concepts of empowerment and disempowerment in relation to women.<sup>149</sup> Although Maynard does not specifically refer to First Nation women, her comments easily relate to Nuuchah-Nulth women as focussing on narrative methods within more conventional approaches offers new insights into what is hidden. Debate about methodologies has progressed since the development of feminist research in the 1980s, into a wider spectrum that questions the very nature of women's knowledge and experience. By using a historical approach that reflects on the merits of oral history towards understanding women's lived experiences, and by using historical journals alongside present day interviews, and consideration of the effects of historical events on women's lives, Nuuchah-Nulth women are firmly situated in society, allowing them to be seen and heard.

Feminist methodologies were formulated and applied to all aspects of societies and cultures worldwide as a response to issues of gender equality and male dominance in the 1970s, research concerns focusing on the invisibility of women within different contexts and cultures.<sup>150</sup> It was argued that to 'add women' (to existing studies of men) 'and stir' would not redress issues of inequality as women needed to be included and made visible, to highlight the value of women's lives as worthy of analysis, emphasising the need to transmit knowledge on

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<sup>149</sup> Maynard, M., Afshar, H. Franks, M. & Wray, S. (Eds.)(2008) *Women in Later Life: Exploring 'Race' and Ethnicity*, Open University Press, UK.

<sup>150</sup> Mies, M. (1983) 'Towards a Methodology for Feminist Research' in Bowles, G. & Duelli Klein, R. (Eds.) *Theories of Women's Studies*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London: pp117-139; Stanley, L. & Wise, S. (1983) *Breaking Out: Feminist Consciousness and Feminist Research*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London; Maynard, M. & Purvis, J. (Eds.)(1994) *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminine Perspective*, Taylor & Francis Ltd., London; Kelly, L., Burton, S. & Regan, L. (1994) 'Researching Women's Lives or Studying Women's Oppression? Reflections on what Constitutes Feminist Research' in Maynard, M. & Purvis, J. (Eds.)(1994) *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective*, Taylor & Francis, London.

women's terms. Women were for so many years hidden from history.<sup>151</sup> In her classic study of women, Rowbotham revealed how class, work, family life and society shaped and hindered women's lives in their struggle against obscurity throughout history.

Feminist research has sought, first and foremost, to render women's experience visible. Women are often defined in relation to men, their responsibilities as wives to husbands or mothers to children restricted to an unchanging domestic environment; research on and about women should start from the women themselves otherwise the research could be considered invalid and misleading. This study embraces women, a woman interviewing women, observing women, and critically listening to women, and a particularly important aspect of the whole process is to see how the social behaviours of Nu'u'Chah'Nulth women's lives are conceptualised. Before the 1970s social theory and debate purported to speak for everyone when in fact it was 'grounded in, derived from, based on', and reinforced the perceptions and beliefs of men.<sup>152</sup> Also, the word 'man' was understood to represent men, the generic norm, and women were measured against this norm. No one, it seems, was prepared to explain why this is the case, why research assumes a male dominance to be the natural line of enquiry, producing both a limited, and ultimately partial perspective of social life and an unbalanced explanation of history. It should be easy to correct this imbalance, to document and analyse women's social, economic, and cultural experiences using conventional methods, but this does not appear to be so. The 'adding on' approach substitutes women for men in the research paradigm and, in the process, analysis is misleading.<sup>153</sup>

The philosopher, Sandra Harding,<sup>154</sup> argues against the idea of a distinct feminine methodology as she believes preoccupation with methodologies clouds feminist research issues. She is also averse to the idea of 'adding on women' to existing social science research and analysis, believing new information would be added to already flawed and distorted male focused discourse, the premise of writing about women would be untrue. Harding suggests three distinct strategies: listening to and interviewing women, observing behaviour, or examining historical records and a combination of all three are considered the most successful. Thirty years ago, Stanley and Wise voiced their concerns about 'adding on' theories suggesting

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<sup>151</sup> Rowbotham, S. (1977) *Hidden from History*, Pluto, London.

<sup>152</sup> Du Bois, B. (1983) 'Passionate Scholarship: notes on Values, Knowing and Method in Feminist Social Science' in Bowles, G. & Duelli Klein, R. (Eds.) *Theories of Women's Studies*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London: p.106; See also: Mies, M. *Towards a Methodology for Feminist Research*.

<sup>153</sup> Duelli Klein, R. (1983) 'How to do what we want: thoughts about feminist methodology' in Bowles, G. & Duelli Klein, R. (Eds.) *Theories of Women's Studies*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.

<sup>154</sup> Harding, S. (Ed.) (1987) *Feminism & Methodology*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, UK; Professor Sandra Harding is Vice-Chancellor and President of James Cook University, Australia. Born in 1935 she is an American philosopher of feminist and post-colonial theory, epistemology, research methodology and philosopher of science.

instead a more suitable approach to the question of making women more inclusive within academic discourse as feminist research is 'on, by, and for women,'<sup>155</sup> bringing into focus aspects of women's lives hitherto absent from historical records. Maynard<sup>156</sup> encourages women to speak out about their past, to challenge the authenticity of historical records, to add the detail previously omitted. Feminist research should make visible the social organisation of women's experience, their role within society and prioritise listening to fully appreciate and understand Nuu'Chah'Nulth women's egalitarian standing in society, not an easy task. In a recent email communication Dr Marlene Atleo challenged my own thinking, alerting me to my limited understanding of cultural difference when she wrote:

The voices of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women are only hidden to those who have no ears to hear because the cultural framework is missing.<sup>157</sup>

She continues:

The key to the traditional economic power and strength of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women was that they literally created the social networks along which resources flowed while males were keepers of their territory.<sup>158</sup>

Within this brief communication, Dr Atleo raises new information, casting doubts on previous thinking, making us reconsider former knowledge in the light of new reasoning challenging earlier opinions and perceptions. She also alerts us to a dilemma: Aboriginal women do not recognise the word 'feminism', believing it to be an integral part of western thinking. In Aboriginal reasoning 'feminism' sets up a male/female dichotomy unworkable, and often non-existent, in First Nation communities. Dr Atleo is not alone in her thinking.<sup>159</sup> Dine poet, Laura Tohe, declares: 'there is no word for feminism in my language ... there [is] no need for feminism because of our matrilineal culture.'<sup>160</sup> Lakota scholar, Joyzelle Godfrey, goes further, reinforcing the idea feminism really has no place in Aboriginal cultures and traditions; and Lisa Udel believes Aboriginal women display 'a reluctance to affiliate with white feminist movements of North America', contending these women see white feminism as advocating 'a devaluation of motherhood and refutation of women's traditional responsibilities.'<sup>161</sup> Paula Gunn Allen suggests the qualities of leadership, empowerment, and survival by Aboriginal women, ever present in Aboriginal cultures from time immemorial continue to be present

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<sup>155</sup> Stanley, L. & Wise, S. *Breaking Out: Feminist Consciousness and Feminist Research*: p.17.

<sup>156</sup> Maynard, M. & Purvis, J. (Eds.) *Researching Women's Lives*.

<sup>157</sup> From an email communication between Dr Marlene Atleo and myself, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2012; Marlene Atleo is married to Dr Richard Atleo, author of *Tsawalk: A Nuu'Chah'Nulth Worldview*.

<sup>158</sup> Email communication between Dr Marlene Atleo and myself, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

<sup>159</sup> This echoes previous comments from Thomas King: native co-operation is not part of western thinking which is not only based on hierarchy but also on dichotomy.

<sup>160</sup> Tohe, L. 'There is No Word for Feminism in my Language' in *Wicazo Sa Review: A Journal of Native American Studies* (2000) 15:2; pp103 -110.

<sup>161</sup> Udel, Lisa J. (2001) 'Revision and Resistance: The Politics of Native Women's Motherwork' in *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies*, 22:2: pp43-62; quote p.45.

despite traumatic changes to their lives. Aboriginal women identify, first and foremost, as Indian women, teaching traditional skills based on their talents and strengths; it is through these strengths decolonisation takes place.<sup>162</sup> However, for Aboriginal women to accept the rhetoric purported to be stated by feminists, that men and women are separate, is nonsense given the Aboriginal belief in a complementary balance of power, an egalitarian society, rather than a structure that is divided. Aboriginal people do not view their existence as separate entities, believing communities cannot maintain healthy infrastructures without balance between women and men, as both are needed and necessary for continuity and survival. Within this study it is also important to remember the historical elements as, according to many historical sources women traditionally had a limited role with little interaction between women and men raising the question: how is it possible to build a complementary society without including the role of women in the academic discourse?

This research is about Nuu'Chah'Nulth women and it will start from the women: if I ignore this premise the research is misleading and invalid. Ramazanoglu, writing in 1989, realised in her earlier 1960s study, she had taken for granted 'men were at the centre of the world', with women being defined in relation to men rather than as people in their own right.<sup>163</sup> Quite rightly, she revised her thinking realising if her earlier research had started from the women the outcomes arising from her analysis would have been different. Maybe other research needs refreshing, re-analysing and re-evaluating to re-define women as people in their own right.

## Aboriginal Studies

Consideration of feminist methodologies cannot be explored in isolation from Aboriginal Studies. Even at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Cannella and Manuelito<sup>164</sup> noticed that while feminist research is still a highly contested matter they suggest there has been a conservative backlash causing feminist and Aboriginal inquiry to be marginalised once again, becoming blurred rather than distinct as, although the study of women has never been more robust with research on diverse women profiting from decades of ground-breaking attention, some women, and First Nations women in particular, can still be seen to be pushed to the

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<sup>162</sup> Allen, Paula Gunn (1997) 'Kochinnenako in Academe' in Warhol, R. & Herndl, D. (Eds.) *Feminisms*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick: pp112-118; Allen's undertaking of 'recovering the feminine' in Aboriginal societies and culture is both traditional and feminist.

<sup>163</sup> Ramazanoglu, C. (1989) 'Improving on Sociology: the problems of taking a feminist standpoint', *Sociology* 23(3): 427-442.

<sup>164</sup> Cannella, G. & Manuelito, K.D. 'Feminisms from Unthought Locations: Indigenous Worldviews, Marginalised Feminisms, and Revisioning an Anticolonial Social Science' in Denzin, N.K., Lincoln, Y.S. & Smith, L.T. (Eds.) (2008) *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, Sage Publications Inc., Thousand Oaks, California: pp45-59.

margins. That is to say, while women's presence is acknowledged studies of women need to be revised, rethought and fully engaged across all research fields. This study of Nu'u'Chah'Nulth women acknowledges the strengths of women within their communities and not at the margins, by making visible their thoughts, knowledge, and beliefs through interviewing and archival material.

Interconnecting strands of feminist inquiry can be divided into smaller, more manageable, segments for effective research,<sup>165</sup> and among these strands sits the specific discipline of Aboriginal women, providing a strong foundation from which to challenge oppressive social and colonial institutions. L.T. Smith reminds us, quite rightly, methodology is important because 'it frames the questions being asked, determines the methodologies to be employed and shapes the analysis.'<sup>166</sup> She describes how research should proceed within Aboriginal and feminist contexts through the participatory research model, interviewing. She also stresses the need to approach research from an anti-oppressive and de-colonising stance whilst at the same time making us aware of the complexities of a truly decolonising endeavour.<sup>167</sup>

This thesis is underpinned by an understanding of and approach to researching Aboriginal knowledge, voice and experience.<sup>168</sup> More importantly, this study is committed to dialogue between people, so the process will not be considered in isolation from everything sustaining the lives, culture and traditions of Nu'u'Chah'Nulth women; it is their knowledge, perceptions and understandings that are being sought. However, one must not lose sight of the fact these women do not live in isolation but are an integral part of the whole community, and with this in mind their concerns will be voiced, the changes their lives have undergone, their interactions with the wider world and their status as women in the twenty-first century. The use of stories, detailing aspects of their lives, will deliver this knowledge and understanding by placing the individual women and their narratives at the heart of this discourse. The interviews afford opportunities for rectifying bias in history, thereby acknowledging Nu'u'Chah'Nulth women.

During the 'Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples', 1994-2004, debate surrounded the idea of developing new understandings and approaches privileging Aboriginal knowledge,

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<sup>165</sup> Olesen, V. (2005) 'Early Millennial feminist Qualitative Research: Challenges and Contours' in Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA; pp235-278.

<sup>166</sup> Smith, L.T. (1999) *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, University of Otago Press, Dunedin, New Zealand; p.143.

<sup>167</sup> Smith, L.T. *Decolonising Methodologies* p.32.

<sup>168</sup> Abrams, Lynn *Oral History Theory*; Perks, R. & Thomson, A. (Eds.) *The Oral History Reader*.



voices and experiences rather than the processes commonly used within research.<sup>169</sup> It was realised non-Aboriginal scholars would have to learn how to deconstruct and de-colonise traditional ways of research, 'learning how to let go'.<sup>170</sup> However, there has been a backlash against qualitative research that questions the validity and reliability of evidenced-based research with criticisms from all directions,<sup>171</sup> raising the question: has research into Aboriginal thinking really moved forward? While there has certainly been 'a marked growth in literature on tribal-based methodologies' over the last few years,<sup>172</sup> Linda Tuhiwai-Smith reminds us of the importance and necessity of linking Aboriginal processes and knowledge with more formal Indigenous methodologies in order to make them widely known and recognisable while Margaret Kovach situates Indigenous methodologies within the wider framework of qualitative research and western academia for a greater understanding of the importance of a holistic, integrated indigenous research framework.<sup>173</sup>

From a vantage point of the colonised, contends Smith, the word 'research' is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Aboriginal world, as the term is inextricably linked to European imperialism, as the way knowledge about Aboriginal cultures is collected, classified and then represented within western academia is questionable.<sup>174</sup> Observations and reports of Aboriginal people were incorporated into the colonising strategies developed to control a people considered to be uncivilised, and qualitative research methodologies have continued to be used in the name of colonisation.<sup>175</sup> Consider the following: the eighteenth century journals of Cook et al purport to suggest alternative viewpoints whilst at the same time writing from a colonialist viewpoint.

Writing about women continues to be at the periphery of research whether or not the study is associated with 'white female privilege' or the historical marginalising of First Nation

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<sup>169</sup> Batiste, M. (2006) *The Global Challenge: Research Ethics for Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage*, Keynote address presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, University of Illinois on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2006; Smith, L.T. (2006) 'Choosing the Margins: The Role of Research in Indigenous Struggles for Social Justice' in Denzin, N.K. & Giardina, M. D. (Eds.)(2006) *Qualitative Inquiry and the Conservative Challenge: Confronting Methodological Fundamentalism*, Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek, CA, pp151-174; Smith, L.T. (2005) 'On Tricky Ground: Researching the Native in the Age of Uncertainty' in Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA: pp85-107.

<sup>170</sup> Denzin, N.K., Lincoln, Y.S. & Smith, L.T. (Eds.)(2008) *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, Sage Publications Inc., Thousand Oaks, CA: p.3.

<sup>171</sup> Denzin et al *Handbook of Critical Indigenous Methodologies*.

<sup>172</sup> Kovach, M. (2010) *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*, University of Toronto Press: p.13; see also Suzack, C., Huhndorf, S.M., Perrault, J. & Barman, J. (Eds.)(2010) *indigenous women and feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver.

<sup>173</sup> Kovach, M. *Indigenous Methodologies*.

<sup>174</sup> Smith, L.T. *De-Colonising Methodologies* p.1.

<sup>175</sup> Battiste, M. (Ed.) *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*.

women, so patriarchy and misogyny are alive and well.<sup>176</sup> Nevertheless, feminist research now extends across wide-ranging issues including voice, representation, empowerment and complex systems of governance, research that acknowledges the complexity and diversity of women.<sup>177</sup> Cannella and Manuelito<sup>178</sup> appear determined to provide a radical rethinking of the purpose, methods, and interpretation of social research, a re-visioning of Aboriginal 'feminist' worldviews, in an attempt to challenge and unsettle conservative thinking as they believe these worldviews have traditionally marginalised female thought and practice. Recognising Aboriginal people are rooted within their histories, these two women are attempting to understand the conflicts that arise. Cannella and Manuelito talk, and write, from an extremely sound foundation, bringing to academic research the strong beliefs and commitments of Euro-American and Navajo ancestry, while integrating aboriginal worldviews with traditional thinking, a wonderful mixture of ideas and thoughts. They believe the purposes, questions and methodologies of research must be transformed and opened to both traditional and colonialist forms of academic presentations extending, expanding, and encompassing the diversity of Aboriginal perspectives as well as the strengths of women.

Thus it is necessary within these complex contexts to be able to move from theory to narrative and back again, challenging preconceptions, ideas, and colonial thinking. Narrative and theory work together symbolising the power of women's lives and it is envisaged these chapters will reveal this combination of strength and diversity among Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, that through the evidence of interviews, stories and artefacts their Aboriginal pasts will be envisioned in the present. In order to accomplish this, Nuu'Chah'Nulth history needs to be structured and interwoven alongside western history, placing it within a western time-frame as testimony. Great care needs to be taken to ensure there is balance that Nuu'Chah'Nulth history is not subsumed into western history and, in the process, marginalised. The journey

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<sup>176</sup> Lincoln, Y.S. & Cannella, G.S. (2004) 'Qualitative Research, Power, and the Radical Right' in Denzin, N., Lincoln, Y.S. & Smith, L.T. (Eds.)(2008) *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, Sage Publications Ltd., Thousand Oaks, CA: p.46.

<sup>177</sup> Harding, S. *Feminism and Methodology*; Mohanty, C.T. (1988) 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarships and Colonial Discourses', *Feminist Review*, 30, pp60-88; Mauthner, M., Birch, M. Jessop, J. & Miller, T. (Eds.)(2002) *Ethics in Qualitative Research*, Sage Publications Inc., Thousand Oaks, California; Olesen, V. *Early Millennial Feminist Qualitative Research*.

<sup>178</sup> Cannella, G.S. & Manuelito, K.D. 'Feminisms from Unthought Locations: Indigenous Worldviews, Marginalised Feminisms, and Revisioning an Anticolonial Social Science' Denzin, N.K., Lincoln, Y.S. & Smith, L.T. (Eds.)(2008) *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, Sage Publications Inc., Thousand Oaks, CA: pp45-59; Dr Gaile Cannella is Professor of Education & Velma E Schmidt Endowed Chair at the University Of Northern Texas; Kathryn Manuelito is Assistant Professor at the Arizona State University; she has Navajo ancestry.

begins two centuries ago with the arrival of the mamalhn'i<sup>179</sup> on Nuu'Chah'Nulth lands on the west-coast of Vancouver Island.

Even though we were patriarchal the men still respected, still highly respected the women.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Mamalhn'i means 'the people who came from over the sea, the white men'; evidenced in interviews and Cote, C. *Spirits of our Whaling Ancestors*.

<sup>180</sup> Interview with Jackie, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009: p.6 of transcript.

# Chapter Three: A Collision of Two Worlds, 1778-1860

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They listened to the women and they would ask the women what they should do. They still ask them, the women still tell them what should be done, what needed to be done. It had to be done in private and then the decision was taken back to the meeting.<sup>181</sup>

It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that the world of the Nuuchah-Nulth was disrupted and changed by the mamalhn'i with the arrival of Captain Cook in 1778 and the way contact took place had a decisive influence on the future relationship between two very different groups of people.

This first encounter was characterised by a mixture of curiosity and fear as the region around Nootka Sound became the focal point of European activities. Much of today's knowledge of the area originates from this period; Cook, Bodega y Quadra and Vancouver are household names and a number of bicentennial events were held to celebrate 'European discovery' of the west-coast of Vancouver Island: in 1978 the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of Captain Cook in Nootka Sound, in 1989 the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the introduction of Christianity by the Spanish, and in 1992 the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the meeting between Bodega y Quadra and George Vancouver in Kyuquot Sound.<sup>182</sup> These celebrations focused on European achievement. However, the Nuuchah-Nulth, and the Mowachaht<sup>183</sup> in particular, whose ancestors and history have evolved over thousands of years, recognise the advent of European arrival as a defining event in Nuuchah-Nulth history, the celebrations representing a time when an aspect of European history converged with a point in time of Nuuchah-Nulth history. Focusing on the detrimental impact of European influences and impositions in establishing the historical debate at this time is important in understanding change within Nuuchah-Nulth society, the effects of those changes, how Eurocentric historical accounts of the period and latterly the celebration subtexts have occluded or silenced Nuuchah-Nulth voices, particularly women's voices. Nevertheless, in order to present balance in historic records, consideration must be given to the positive aspects of the historical encounter. For an outsider, explaining

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<sup>181</sup> Interview with Kathy Robinson, May 2009: pp5-6; the protocols of trading and decision-making are explained; this Nuuchah-Nulth Elder explains how they traded furs with buyers from the Hudson Bay Company in the early twentieth century; she makes reference to earlier times saying *'it was the big ships that came in'*.

<sup>182</sup> Pethick, D. *The Nootka Connection*; Hoover, Alan (Ed.) *Nuuchah-Nulth Voices*; Kyuquot Sound is on the west coast of Vancouver Island.

<sup>183</sup> The Mowachaht are one of the Nuuchah-Nulth bands located around Nootka Sound.

the distinct Nuu'Chah'Nulth belief systems before the arrival of the mamalhn'i is difficult so the words of Dr Michelle Corfield offer a rational and valid explanation: every point of view is to be respected, acknowledged and accepted, no relationship or practice is viewed as wrong, there is an absence of coercion or hegemonic tendencies in Nuu'Chah'Nulth belief system.<sup>184</sup>

### Life in Nuu'Chah'Nulth Communities pre-1778

The phrase *heshook-ish tsawalk*, meaning 'everything is one' which according to fundamental Nuu'Chah'Nulth beliefs and principles suggests 'reality is the sum total of existence',<sup>185</sup> refers to traditional ways, ideas still informing Nuu'Chah'Nulth life today. The word *tsawalk* encapsulates their worldview as an integrated and orderly whole, every aspect of Nuu'Chah'Nulth life is connected, expressed as *heshook*. In other words, within the Nuu'Chah'Nulth worldview, there is an interrelationship and balance between harmony and disharmony. For the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, these concepts are interconnected as *heshook-ish tsawalk* embraces both origin stories, the foundation of all knowledge, and twenty-first century thinking and technologies. Both are needed for balance and harmony. Relationships between women, between family members, between bands, diverse and similar, are seen as interconnected and interrelated dependent upon peoples' relationship to their environment, and it is the impositions of colonisation, residential schooling, and Euro-American thinking that fractured this lived experience of coherence and unity.

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the Nuu'Chah'Nulth lived a comparatively settled life with occasional skirmishes between bands. The ultimate social unit was the family, the political unit was the village or community, with each community containing representatives of several genealogical families, each group of families claiming descent from a common ancestor. Nuu'Chah'Nulth society was structured around the community so each individual is connected to a larger group either through birth or marriage which, in turn, depended on degrees of kinship and property, not only material things but also intangible possessions, like the exclusive right to specific songs and dances.<sup>186</sup> Women and men's roles were complementary with neither having a higher status; roles were specific as both were necessary for progress,

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<sup>184</sup> Dr Michelle Corfield, *Self-government: an Ucluelet First Nation Perspective*, unpublished MA thesis, August 2002.

<sup>185</sup> Atleo, E.R. (2004) *Tsawalk*: introduction, p. xi; note 1:p135; a deeper meaning of *heshook-ish tsawalk* could include 'inclusive of all reality, the total sum of everything', stemming from Nuu'Chah'Nulth origin stories; Dr Corfield explains: everything is connected, the people to the land, the land to the sea ... an inclusive statement.

<sup>186</sup> Jenness, Diamond (1932/1963) *Indians of Canada, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition*, issued under the Authority of the Secretary of State, National Museum of Canada, Bulletin 65, Anthropological Series No. 15; songs and dances followed both the female and male line passing to children/nieces/nephews at will, whoever decreed, p.142; further detail on songs and dances in Chapter Seven.

stability, balance and survival, sentiments endorsed by Leacock when she wrote of an egalitarian society: 'the prestige of pre-colonial native women is an excellent example of women's empowerment in communal economies.'<sup>187</sup> More importantly, women's views and decisions were honoured and respected, their knowledge valued and appreciated as according to the *Hawithpatak* Nuu'Chah'Nulth, 'women are the keepers of knowledge, history, and *ha-huupa*.'<sup>188</sup>

The people lived in long, cedar-plank houses.<sup>189</sup> Living in both temporary and permanent settlements, winter and summer camps, Nuu'Chah'Nulth women made the most of seasonal resource gathering, using the beaches for collecting clams, for cleaning, gutting, drying, and smoking fish, and the forests for picking berries and various plant foods, and catching small mammals for sustenance. 'Women created the social networks along which resources flowed',<sup>190</sup> I am told, networks integral to the social and economic sustainability of the communities. Their large, finely carved dug-out canoes, made of red cedar, allowed the people to travel to distant places and villages for feasts and ceremonies, connecting people to each other, communicating with family, friends and bands, to fish the waterways utilising the abundant resources, and to engage in economic ventures. Nuu'Chah'Nulth land has been inhabited for millennia by people who evolved complex networks, systems of trade and social hierarchies that meshed totally with their spiritual beliefs, values, and traditions. Many of the communities were, and still are, very isolated, connected only by dirt roads, boats, and, if they can afford it, by float planes. Now, in the twenty-first century, the internet has made communication and accessibility between communities easier, opening-up new opportunities. There are fifteen Nuu'Chah'Nulth nations sharing a common language, albeit with differing dialects, and similar governance structures, connected through culture and tradition, marriage and inter-tribal protocol arrangements. Each nation enjoyed autonomy of its *ha'houlthee*,<sup>191</sup> respecting boundaries, while remaining socially and politically connected. The people had owned and governed their territories along the west-coast since time immemorial, living communally and in harmony with its maritime environment, but that was all to change towards the end of the eighteenth century.

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<sup>187</sup> Leacock in Deloria, P. & Salisbury, N. (Eds.)(2004) *A Companion to American Indian History*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., Mass.

<sup>188</sup> Extract from the Nuu'Chah'Nulth Tribal Council statement, 2004; *ha-huupa* means 'teachings'

<sup>189</sup> Interview with Kathy Robinson, April 2009: p.7 of transcript; Kathy provides a clear detailed picture of long-house accommodation.

<sup>190</sup> From an email communication between Dr Marlene Atleo and myself; 5<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

<sup>191</sup> *Ha-hool-thee* meaning traditional territories.

## The Maritime Fur-trade and Ownership

Nootka Sound on the west-coast of Vancouver Island, relatively unknown to Europeans before 1774,<sup>192</sup> became the focal point for considerable debate as to ownership and economic viability with intense competition between different interest groups.<sup>193</sup> The lure and promise of the maritime fur-trade, causing men to visit this sheltered harbour and trade with the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, proved to be profitable and relatively harmonious. As knowledge of a rich trade in sea-otter furs spread around the world, the north-west Pacific was inevitably drawn into a complex web of world trade, international rivalries and political intrigue. The fur-trade disrupted the world of First Nations by fostering conflicts between groups who jockeyed to control the supply of furs into European markets and trading routes to the interior by spreading epidemic diseases, stimulating the migration of whole populations, by introducing new technologies and, in the process, drawing First Nations into an international commodity marketing system.<sup>194</sup> The coming of Europeans changed a rich and complex world geographically and culturally, socially and economically although not necessarily negatively. As it has been suggested the fur-trade enhanced rather than degraded Nuu'Chah'Nulth society: it was probably a mixed blessing rather than a disaster.<sup>195</sup> The maritime fur-trade re-orientated traditional hunter/gatherer practices towards hunting for sea-otters but did not have the social and economic impact of sustained contact that came with the arrival of settlers in the mid-nineteenth century. The principal effect of the fur-trade was to intensify features of Nuu'Chah'Nulth cultural systems, made possible by the injection of substantial amounts of wealth into an already wealth-orientated gift-sharing social system.<sup>196</sup>

The coastal fur-trade became a reciprocal arrangement between the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, who were keen traders and no novices at trading practices, and the visiting traders, a positive interaction. Although some believe Europeans took advantage of the local people, others consider this situation was similar to other societies evolving through trade and cross-cultural changes throughout history: a culture developing over time taking on board new, and sometimes unwelcome ideas, as well as rejecting less useful information. With a flourishing maritime fur-trade developing, a complex dispute over sovereignty escalated. Questions arose amongst the Europeans: who would control the area and its

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<sup>192</sup> James Cook is regarded as the first European visitor in 1778. Juan Perez had arrived four years earlier in 1774 although he did not land.

<sup>193</sup> Different interest groups included British, Spanish, Russian and American.

<sup>194</sup> Pethick, D., *The Nootka Connection*.

<sup>195</sup> Fisher, R. *Contact and Conflict*; Harris, Cole (2002) *Making Native Space*; Hoover, A. L. (Ed.) *Nuu'Chah'Nulth Voices*.

<sup>196</sup> A key part of the social system was the ceremony known as the potlatch, a word imposed by colonialism, meaning gift-giving and gift-sharing ceremonies.

promise of a new wealth source, and which country had the legal right to do so? On the morning of 9<sup>th</sup> August 1774, Spanish Captain Juan Perez became the first man to see the entrance to Nootka Sound and, although the visit was brief, a small group of 'First Peoples had seen and now knew of the existence of white people who lived in floating houses and possessed great wealth'.<sup>197</sup> Word of these visitors spread quickly up and down the coast from one band to another, although the Spanish government kept the existence and location of the sound secret from other European traders. Cook mentions Perez's visit to Nootka Sound, remarking on the fact the 'Spaniards [were] not such eager traders'.<sup>198</sup> Unlike the Spanish, British explorers, fur traders and ships' captains' were very prompt to publish their discoveries. Further north, Russia, who had been entrenched for over a century, considered extending economic opportunities and sovereignty southward; France and America also took an interest. All had viable arguments in claiming control of the north-west Pacific.

Two reasons are cited for determining ownership of the 'new' lands: prior discovery and effective occupation of the lands. Spain could certainly claim the first: in 1542 Captain Cabrillo had sailed north to latitude 44'; in 1543 and 1602 Spanish mariners, Ferredo and Vizcaino, landed but not settled (the Spanish were concentrating on developing settlement on the Californian coast); and in 1773, the Spanish Viceroy in Mexico City, Antonio Bucareli, organised an expedition in the Santiago, the voyage of Juan Perez which briefly anchored in Nootka Sound in August 1774.<sup>199</sup> It is interesting to consider, had the Spanish given up their policy of secrecy and published the journals of Perez, Bodega or Martinez,<sup>200</sup> would Spain have received the recognition given to Britain? In world thinking, the north-west coast became British by virtue of Cook setting the precedence through trade and settlement. However, despite the fact the Nuu'Chah'Nulth were an integral partner in the flourishing maritime fur-trade, they were never considered in the important question concerning ownership of land.

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<sup>197</sup> Inglis, R. & Haggerty, James C. 'Cook to Jewitt: Three Decades of Change in Nootka Sound' in Hoover, A.L. (2000) *Nuu'Chah'Nulth Voices, Histories, Objects & Journeys*, Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, BC: p94; Pethick, D. *The Nootka Connection*.

<sup>198</sup> Cook, J. *A Voyage to the Pacific*, Saturday & Sunday, 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> April 1778: p.332; even today major Spanish reference works credit Cook rather than Juan Perez with the discovery of Nootka Sound; 'Nu'tka: Captain Cook & the Spanish Explorers on the Coast', *Sound Heritage*, Vol. VII, No. 1 (1978), Aural History Provincial Archives of British Columbia.

<sup>199</sup> Pethick, D. *The Nootka Connection*, pp18-23; Mozino, Jose M. *Noticias de Nutka*; Fisher, R. *Contact and Conflict*; the Spanish did not land preferring to trade Californian abalone shells for furs from the Nuu'Chah'Nulth over the side of their ships.

<sup>200</sup> It has been suggested that the journals kept by the officers of the Expedition led by Ignacio de Arteaga and Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra in June 1779 provide excellent information on Nuu'Chah'Nulth society, indicating they should have been published; see also the Voyage of Esteban Jose Martinez in 1788 and Voyages of Malaspina between 1789 and 1794.



In 1788, John Meares<sup>201</sup> erected a building on appropriated land in Friendly Cove<sup>202</sup> to house carpenters building the 'North-West American',<sup>203</sup> launched in 1790 in the presence of Chief Maquinna of the Mowachaht. More importantly, Meares bought land from the Nuw'Chah'Nulth in exchange for guns and other trade goods and, although the facts of the transaction are hard to establish, they would later form the basis of British claims to trade freely in Nootka Sound, claims strongly disputed by the Spanish.<sup>204</sup> Conflict was diffused with the signing of the Nootka Convention on 28<sup>th</sup> October 1790 by representatives of Spain and Britain, ending the struggle for control of the northwest Pacific and its valuable resources. Spain, while continuing to garrison a fort in Nootka Sound, until abandoning it in 1795, agreed to allow British ships to freely enter and trade at Nootka Sound whilst still hoping the decision would be reversed. The agreement signified the end of Spanish claims for the northwest Pacific but opened the way for expansion of British trade.<sup>205</sup>

This was an explosive time – the meeting of two cultures, misunderstandings and misconceptions of language, traditions and culture. Europeans brought with them diseases that ravaged villages, a belief system diametrically opposed to the spirituality of the Nuw'Chah'Nulth, and a new economy with the potential to destabilise well-established lifestyles.<sup>206</sup> Proposals were put forward by Meares for a new economy centred on the north-west Pacific to increase 'the wealth, the power and the prosperity of the British Empire', believing the Nuw'Chah'Nulth would become sophisticated and even demand cutlery.<sup>207</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century, considerable progress had been made in exploiting resources

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<sup>201</sup> John Meares, 1756-1809 was a navigator, explorer, and maritime fur trader. He arrived in Nootka Sound May 1788 to trade furs. Meares claimed Chief Maquinna sold him some land in Friendly Cove in exchange for pistols and other trade goods. In 1785 Meares formed the Northwest American Co. for collecting sea otter furs, trading with the Nuw'Chah'Nulth, and selling furs in China. In 1790 he published *Voyages made in the Years 1788 & 1789 from China to the North-West Coast of America*: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Meares](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Meares).

<sup>202</sup> The name 'Friendly Cove' was given to the Nuw'Chah'Nulth people by Cook because of their reputation as 'peaceable and willing to supply the vessels with fresh foods and other supplies' in Inglis, R. & Haggarty, J.C. (1983) *Provisions or Prestige: a Re-Evaluation of the Economic Importance of Nootka Whaling*, Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, BC: p3; John Meares refers to Friendly Cove in his Journal. He describes the area: *houses are large, the common fashion*, the houses are partitioned, accommodating several families; written Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> May 1788, p111; like Cook, Meares sends his men ashore for wood & water, Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 1788; When the Spanish finally abandoned Friendly Cove in January 1795, the Nuw'Chah'Nulth tore down the buildings, rebuilt their own summer houses, and Friendly Cove became Yuquot again; Fisher, R. *Contact and Conflict* p.23.

<sup>203</sup> The 'North-West American' was the first ship to be built in British Columbia.

<sup>204</sup> Fisher, R. *Contact and Conflict*; Pethick, D., *The Nootka Connection*.

<sup>205</sup> Pethick, D., *ibid*.

<sup>206</sup> Cote, Charlotte (2010) *Spirits of our Whaling Ancestors*; R; Fisher, R. *Contact and Conflict*; Pethick, D. *The Nootka Connection*.

<sup>207</sup> Pethick, D., *ibid*, p.xvii.

and exploring hitherto unknown parts of the coast.<sup>208</sup> Increasing trade brought money and European goods for the Nuu'Chah'Nulth but it also led to conflict and ultimately dependency on the mamalhn'i.

## The Journals

The end of the eighteenth century was a time of great change for the Nuu'Chah'Nulth with many visitors leaving records of their encounters with the Nuu'Chah'Nulth in the form of papers, ship's logs, reports, journals and personal diaries. In some ways, the number of visitors in this marine fur-trading era is not surprising, as traders will always be drawn to new areas of enterprise, commerce and opportunity, but maybe what is unusual is the number of detailed written records on the economic, political and social observations of the people they encountered, particularly Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, all contributing to understanding the momentous meetings taking place between people from different cultures. There are similarities between the observations and perceptions of the journal writers, and it is worth noting these to provide a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth people and their society at that time.

Cook wrote: the land is 'inhabited by a race of people, whose inoffensive behaviour promised a friendly intercourse'.<sup>209</sup> He remarks upon the courtesy with which he is entertained when visiting their homes, calling the people 'hospitable friends whom I visited',<sup>210</sup> considerations he repeats throughout his brief stay at Nootka Sound despite occasional altercations and disagreements. Meares writes of the 'generous friendship, [the] amiable interchange of kindness which distinguished the polished nations of the world.'<sup>211</sup> These comments and observations about the Nuu'Chah'Nulth are surprisingly thoughtful and insightful considering the prevailing supremacist beliefs and attitudes at that time. Over the next few pages, the various journals of Cook, Mozino, Jewitt and Walker will be mentioned, with particular reference to and observations of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women.

## The Arrival of Captain Cook in Nootka Sound

In 1778 on 31<sup>st</sup> March, Captains Cook and Clerke and the crews of the Resolution and the Discovery moored in Nootka Sound, a secure and sheltered harbour on the west-coast of Vancouver Island. As the weather had been bad, the ships needed maintenance, refitting and food replenished. The Mowachaht gathered in front of their plank houses in the village of Yuquot to meet and welcome Captain Cook, and, despite initial misunderstandings and

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<sup>208</sup> Sproat, Gilbert *Scenes and Studies of Savage Life*, p.11.

<sup>209</sup> Cook, J. *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*. Book IV, Chapter 1: 29<sup>th</sup> March 1778: p.269.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., Book IV, Chapter 1, Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April 1778: p.280.

<sup>211</sup> Meares' Journal, written Friday 16<sup>th</sup> May, 1788: p.114.

linguistic difficulties, the first contact between these two very different peoples went well, peaceably and profitable for both sides.<sup>212</sup> Opportunities were taken to trade otter, beaver, and other furs with the Mowachaht, and thriving and flourishing exchanges soon developed.<sup>213</sup> Cook reports: 'trade commenced betwixt us and them, which was carried on with the Strictest honesty on both sides:<sup>214</sup> if they had any distrust or fear of us [they] now laid it aside [and] mixed with our people with the greatest freedom.'<sup>215</sup> Similar sentiments were also recorded by John Meares when he arrived in Nootka Sound ten years later.

Good harmony and friendly intercourse, subsisted between us and the natives will, we trust, be considered as a proof that our conduct was regulated by the principles of humane policy ... And is the true object of commercial policy to employ.<sup>216</sup>

Cook comments specifically on how he and his crew were welcomed by the women.

Some of the young women dressed themselves expeditiously in their best apparel, and, assembling in a body, welcomed us into their village, by joining in a song, which was far from harsh or disagreeable.<sup>217</sup>

The arrival of Captain Cook at Nootka Sound is firmly rooted in Nuu'Chah'Nulth oral histories, the event mentioned during an interview: 'the white people came over in a boat, over the ocean ... floating over the ocean and that's called mamalhn'i.'<sup>218</sup>

It has been suggested contact between the two groups of people was characterised by widespread violence and hostilities although there appears to be little evidence of this.<sup>219</sup> Although the demands made by the Mowachaht on European traders suggest patience was required to transact business negotiations, the hostility of the people has been 'overemphasised in European records. Captains often came to the coast expecting the Indians to be warlike and therefore perceived hostility where it did not exist.'<sup>220</sup> A meeting between Chief Maquinna and Captain Cook provides a good example of expectations of tension between the Nuu'Chah'Nulth and the British, as the people Cook was trading and negotiating

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<sup>212</sup> Referenced at the 'Indianer – Ureinwohner Nordamerikas' Exhibition at the Lokschuppen in Rosenheim, Southern Germany, April 8<sup>th</sup> – November 6<sup>th</sup> 2011.

<sup>213</sup> Cote, C. *Spirits of our Whaling Ancestors*.

<sup>214</sup> Referenced in Cook's ship logs, meetings between the Mowachaht and Cook; words from Cook's Journals published as a Penguin classic, the 2003 edition, Monday 30<sup>th</sup> March, 1778; p.540: Translation - *carried on with the strictest honesty on both sides*; Brown, Craig (Ed.)(2002) *The Illustrated History of Canada*, Key Porter Books Ltd., Toronto.

<sup>215</sup> Cook, J. *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> March 1778: p.270.

<sup>216</sup> Meares Journal (1790) written Thursday June 5<sup>th</sup> 1788: p.119.

<sup>217</sup> Cook, J. *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, early April, 1778: p.282.

<sup>218</sup> *Mamalhn'i* means white man in Nuu'Chah'Nulth, those whose houses float about on the water; Interview with Delores in Port Alberni, April 2010; p3; note the different spellings of this word.

<sup>219</sup> Fisher, R., *Contact and Conflict*.

<sup>220</sup> Fisher, R., *Contact and Conflict* p.13; See also Galois, R. M. 'Nuu'Chah'Nulth Encounters: James Colnett's Expedition of 1787-88' and Inglis, R. and Haggerty, J. 'Cook to Jewitt: Three Decades of Change in Nootka Sound' in Hoover, Alan (Ed.)(2000) *Nuu'Chah'Nulth Voices, Histories, Objects & Journeys*, Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, BC.

with 'suddenly armed themselves and became aggressive'.<sup>221</sup> On the 4<sup>th</sup> April 1778, whilst crew members were cutting wood and collecting water, they

observed natives all around them were arming themselves in the best manner. ... Fears were ill-grounded; their hostile preparations were not directed against us but against a body of their own countrymen, who were coming to fight them.<sup>222</sup>

Cook believed he and his crew were being threatened but the Mowachaht were aiming guns at another band who were trying to trade with Cook, 'the strangers, perhaps, being desirous to share in the advantages of a trade with us.'<sup>223</sup> This was an incident easily calmed as Cook had experience in negotiating with Aboriginal people but other captains were more inexperienced and less discerning.

Control over trade became a contentious issue between bands. Cook, a keen observer of behaviour, became aware certain chiefs and families monopolised trade preventing others from trading with Europeans.<sup>224</sup> Rivalry between the bands living around Nootka Sound was intense as the Mowachaht would 'not permit strangers having any intercourse' with Cook.<sup>225</sup> Chief Wickaninnish who was extremely powerful in maintaining economic domination over the area, exerted 'trade hegemony,' forcing local chiefs to trade through him, exercising control in international trade.<sup>226</sup>

Between 1778 and 1805 was a time of continuous power struggles, and rivalry between Chiefs Maquinna and Callicum,<sup>227</sup> in particular, was legendary. In 1792, Maquinna is said to have borrowed guns and a ship from the Spanish in order to quell unrest and as a display of strength over neighbouring groups who were angling to move into trading opportunities over which Maquinna believed he had precedence. This was not a commercial desert as so many believed as trading patterns already existed with long traditions of commercial activities between First Nation bands. Chief Maquinna controlled an elaborate

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<sup>221</sup> Fisher, R., *Contact and Conflict* p.13.

<sup>222</sup> Cook, J. *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, Book 1V, Chapter 1, p.274; see also Meares' Journal, Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> June 1788: pp143-144 where Meares notices reactions of Wickaninnish to the arrival of other groups.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid, p.274; The Mowachaht would not permit strangers and other West-Coast bands trading with Cook.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., Book 1V, Chapter 1, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1778: p.278.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., Book 1V, Chapter 1: p.278; see also Meares Journal his observations written on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> June 1788: p.130.

<sup>226</sup> McMillan, A.D. *Since the Time of the Transformers*: p.202.

<sup>227</sup> Chiefs Callicum and Maquinna were established at Yuquot but it is not known if they were both in charge of the village. Maquinna believed himself to be of higher rank, while Callicum said they were of equal rank. The rivalry between the two came to an end when Callicum was killed by Martinez on 13<sup>th</sup> July 1789.

trading network with bands on the west coast while Chief Wickaninnish at Clayoquot Sound had similar control over trade to the south of the island.<sup>228</sup>

Relationships between the people and their visitors were often exacerbated by Europeans either not listening to or ignoring information given to them which in turn led to violation of Nuu'Chah'Nulth social customs, protocols, and conflict between two cultures, or perhaps both groups were perceiving information through their own cultural lens and it was cultural misunderstanding. In 1792, Hoskins, from the Columbia, attempted to visit a group of female mourners in spite of being warned away by Chief Wickaninnish, compounding the tension caused by Hoskins' refusal, a few days earlier, of an invitation to a potlatch.<sup>229</sup> Disregard for Nuu'Chah'Nulth protocol through ignorance of their social ways, offended Nuu'Chah'Nulth sensibilities, producing hostilities on a number of occasions.

Cultural change and exchange, a cautious co-operation between two cultures,<sup>230</sup> developed and, although not all of it was beneficial to the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, meetings with traders were used to their advantage for economic, personal, and scientific gain as the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, like the British, were very adept at negotiating. Cook comments on their shrewdness:

They contrived to manage the trade for them in such a manner, that the price of their commodities was always kept up, while the value of ours was lessening every day.<sup>231</sup> Meares confirms these negotiating skills, noticing 'a very brisk trade had been carried on for furs; in the whole business ... they availed themselves of every advantage.'<sup>232</sup> On Tuesday June 17<sup>th</sup> 1788, he remarks, 'people had all the cunning necessary to the gains of mercantile life.'<sup>233</sup> Both Meares and Cook realised the Nuu'Chah'Nulth were very adept at striking a good bargain at the expense of the English: 'In all our commercial transactions with these people, we were, more or less, the dupes of their cunning, [the precautions employed were] not sufficient to prevent our being overreached by them.'<sup>234</sup>

However, not to be beaten by this shrewdness in the trading game, Cook traded metal, particularly iron and brass, for easily acquired sea-otter pelts subsequently reported to have been sold for a fortune in China where sea-otter furs were highly prized. Previously, Perez had noted iron chisels were demanded in exchange for pelts although the sea-otter pelts were not

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<sup>228</sup> Fisher, R. *Contact and Conflict* p.11: Meares writes in detail about his dealings with Chiefs Maquinna, Callicum and Wickaninnish in his journal.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., p.16.

<sup>230</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) Volume 1 *Looking Forward, Looking Back: Stage 2*: p.7.

<sup>231</sup> Cook, J. *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* Book IV, Chapter 1: Saturday, April 18<sup>th</sup> 1778: p.278.

<sup>232</sup> Meares' Journal; Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> June, 1788: p.119.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> June, 1788: p.142.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., June 1788; p.148.

given until the iron was available.<sup>235</sup> Cook credits the Nuu'Chah'Nulth with excellent trading skills believing, quite rightly, the people were not as guileless as others thought. He discovered the people deceived his men by selling them containers of oil partially filled by water, and less valuable land-otter pelts were occasionally substituted for valuable sea-otter pelts. The people made 'some attempt to cheat us by mixing water with the oil and sometimes carried their imposition so far, as to fill their bladders with mere water without a single drop of oil.'<sup>236</sup> The Nuu'Chah'Nulth were confident in their centuries-old established trading methods causing Europeans to reconsider, to redefine their fixed ways of trading, to accede to the established Nuu'Chah'Nulth custom of gift exchange. Meares notes on a number of occasions the habit of giving and receiving gifts, so different to the European way as, according to the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, there was no obligation, a gift was a gift; so 'the whole of our mercantile dealings was carried on by making reciprocal presents.'<sup>237</sup> Nuu'Chah'Nulth trading patterns demonstrated similarities to European ways, the pelts often being sold by middlemen, with representatives of high ranking families demanding their own mark-up. The Nuu'Chah'Nulth adapted swiftly and easily to the presence of foreign boats in their waters as they were quick to see advantageous trading opportunities, to make the most of the situation, rapidly becoming used to new seasonal wealth and economic benefits, manipulating European fears to their own advantage.

Conflict also arose due to European misunderstanding the ways the Nuu'Chah'Nulth understood 'ownership' of their land and resources. The people shrewdly demanded payment for everything, the water, the game and the wood, contrary to the accepted notion First Nations did not believe in a price being put on renewable resources; an interesting example of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth opportunistically appropriating European ethos of stamping values onto the natural world for their own advantage. Europeans considered all resources were there for the taking but the Nuu'Chah'Nulth 'considered such behaviour trespass and thievery,' regarding the boats 'as flotsam believing they had the right to salvage within their territorial waters. To Europeans this, of course, was absurd.'<sup>238</sup> Can these examples of Nuu'Chah'Nulth protectionism be seen as a shrewd response to European exploitation, or were such notions of 'territorial waters' and ownership of flotsam traditional in the Nuu'Chah'Nulth scheme of

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<sup>235</sup> Fisher, R. *Contact and Conflict* p.4-5; Mozino, J.; Cook, J. *Journals* p.540; Meares writes in his journal, Friday 16<sup>th</sup> May, 1788 they *exchanged cloaks for copper and iron artefacts*: p.113.

<sup>236</sup> Cook, J. *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* Book 1V, Chapter 1: Saturday, April 18<sup>th</sup> 1778; p.279.

<sup>237</sup> Meares' Journal, Friday 16<sup>th</sup> May, 1788; p.114; and June 1788, pp119-120; Meares mentions how he exchanged copper and iron goods for cloaks. Chief Wickaninnish forced local chiefs to trade through him.

<sup>238</sup> Inglis, R. & Haggerty, J.C. 'Cook to Jewitt: Three Decades of Change in Nootka Sound' in Hoover, Alan L. (Ed.)(2000) *Nuu'Chah'Nulth Voices*: p.100.

things? Or, are we left wondering, if there is no evidence to confirm either way? The social protocol surrounding trade relations was another area of conflict and misunderstanding; Europeans did not appear to understand reciprocal obligations when entertaining, or the prolonged lengths of time that negotiations took as 'ceremonies were accompanied with the utmost display of pride and hospitality.'<sup>239</sup>

The fur-trade on Vancouver Island, like other parts of Canada, was not just a reciprocal economic relationship but a joint venture between two cultures both necessary for the enterprise to be successful. The Nuu'Chah'Nulth were very capable of driving a hard bargain, being very adept at making the most of any opportunity, but poverty made them willing sellers. Some fur-traders made an effort to show an understanding of First Nations culture, to establish relationships, maybe not an equal partnership but an alliance between two cultures, collaboration crucial for survival and one recognising the important economic role of Aboriginal people.<sup>240</sup> Fur-traders were quick to realise they were not living and trapping in an empty land, the people were not 'gullible savages but rational and calculating in pursuit of their own self-interest.'<sup>241</sup> However, there was a negative side to new trading opportunities despite the newly exercised trading skills the Nuu'Chah'Nulth manifested; the economic breakdown of Nuu'Chah'Nulth society as their way of life changed. The marine fur-trade caused a shift in economic and social systems: introduction of firearms escalated tribal warfare which in turn depopulated areas of the island and weakened smaller groups, many of which were incorporated into larger village units. Adjustments to political and social systems resulted, altering resource and settlement patterns.

### The Influence of Nuu'Chah'Nulth Women

Meares believed the people of Nootka Sound were numerous but not of the 'same fierceness'<sup>242</sup> of character as their neighbours. More importantly, he notices the power of the women. Maquilla tells Meares there were several very populous villages to the north of Nootka Sound 'entrusted to the government of the principal female relations of Maquilla and Callicum.'<sup>243</sup> Callicum's mother 'enjoyed a similar delegated power over another district.'<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Meares' Journal, June 1788: p.120.

<sup>240</sup> Fisher, R. *Contact and Conflict* p.18; RCAP pages 2, 6-8; Van Kirk, S. (1983) *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.

<sup>241</sup> Fisher, R. *Contact and Conflict*: p.xiii.

<sup>242</sup> Meares' Journal, Chapter XXI, p.226.

<sup>243</sup> Meares' Journal, Chapter XXI, pp226 – 229; Maquilla is an alternative spelling of Maquinna; both Maquinna and Callicum were chiefs of neighbouring regions on the west coast of Vancouver Island.

<sup>244</sup> Meares' Journal, Chapter XXI, p.229; the village of Maquilla's grandmother had been invaded and a war expedition sent from Nootka Sound.

Having observed the strong position of women related to the chief, Meares refers to this assigning of women's power to:

[the] summons of the sovereign chief [as being] a political band of wives, ... not very unlike the general system of government in Europe, at an early period of its civilization ... the feudal system.<sup>245</sup>

In order to operate an effective trading system, mutual respect in the social relations between the Nuu'Chah'Nulth and Europeans was required and the women played a key part in this exchange particularly through marriage. Women often sought alliances for their own good reasons, establishing lasting relationships rather than just casual liaisons. Van Kirk argues, First Nation women welcomed and actively promoted the introduction of European technology into their lives as objects such as knives, kettles and woollen cloth alleviated domestic duties considerably, accelerating the economic change brought about by these items. First Nation women manipulated the fur-trade system to their advantage although some cultural changes were more difficult to adjust to.<sup>246</sup> Alliances occurred between Nuu'Chah'Nulth women and the fur-traders, with the marriage of James McCarthy to a daughter of Wickaninnish seen as an 'important recognition of mutual trust and willingness to live together, as people in harmony.'<sup>247</sup>

In *Many Tender Ties*, Van Kirk casts First Nation women as active rather than passive participants in the fur-trade but questions whether or not the lives of First Nation women were improved to the extent claimed by the fur-traders. Although acknowledging women had to give up some autonomy, Van Kirk believes that ultimately the gains of taking a white husband outweighed the losses. She writes: 'segregation of the sexes at meals was common in Indian society, but now at least the women did not have to make do with the leftovers.'<sup>248</sup> Increased calories meant greater fertility, lengthening the number of child-bearing years and the number of births. However, consider the pragmatic implications of this cultural shift: with constant pregnancies and childbirths the increase in births is a dubious advantage as harsh conditions still existed, and Christian work ethics created a heavier workload for these women who were often isolated rather than living within their familiar and supportive family and community networks.

Nonetheless, there were economic advantages in having kinship ties with European traders. Some women achieved positions of considerable influence through these marriages,

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<sup>245</sup> Meares' Journal, Chapter XXI, p.229.

<sup>246</sup> Van Kirk, Sylvia *Many Tender Ties*; Kirk's writing focuses on mainland BC rather than Vancouver Island

<sup>247</sup> Corfield, M. p.28.

<sup>248</sup> Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*: p.86.



contributing skills, knowledge, labour and active involvement to transactions.<sup>249</sup> Cook noted the crucial role Nuu'Chah'Nulth women played in the negotiating process, often becoming frustrated at the length of time negotiations took to complete. It was not just a matter of trading goods but of becoming part of the ceremonial process as, until protocol had been recognised, accepted, and acknowledged, trading negotiations could not proceed. The chiefs would not agree to any decision concerning trade proposals and transactions with Europeans until they had conferred with their wives, a process still happening today, two hundred years later. Women's voices were not 'hidden' but were valued in every aspect of Nuu'Chah'Nulth society:

We are in our own power of development ... We don't get up as speakers. This wasn't the government telling us this; this was the teaching of our ancestors ... When the men need to get advice they come to the women, the elders ... These are the proper ways ... the truth.<sup>250</sup>

These words enhance the sense of tradition, the traditional role played by women and their formative voices in developing the strategies shaping negotiations. Many important decisions are agreed before tribal meetings. Discussions about pending treaty or council agreements are carried out between the chief and his wife, or treaty participants and women in the privacy of their homes, the decisions are taken back to meetings as women have no say and are often not present at formal gatherings, protocol that has been in place for many years and is still observed. Women are intricately woven into the decision making process, past and present, their views and ideas listened to and respected, the process is not completed until women's opinions are heard, a fact mentioned during the first interview.

Our voices as women are ... very instrumental in what happens ... It was our role in our communities and ... it has been something passed from generation to generation.<sup>251</sup>

As daughters of a chief, these women are eminently suitable in discussing Nuu'Chah'Nulth protocol, stressing the importance of men listening to women.

Our Dad always listened; he listened to what our mum used to say ... he suggested things and listened to what she had to say ... it wasn't just his ideas.

The sisters continue, saying, as their father was the chief he had a responsibility to listen to his people but in reality 'he had to discuss things with their mother. It wasn't until after he spoke to her he would tell the community' the direction the community needed to take.<sup>252</sup>

By the end of the eighteenth century, Nuu'Chah'Nulth women had no doubts concerning their own value as negotiators, but inevitably, given the lack of cultural

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<sup>249</sup> Fisher, R. *Contact and Conflict*, p.xiv; Kirk *ibid*.

<sup>250</sup> Interview with Delores Bayne in Port Alberni, April 2010; p.1 of transcript.

<sup>251</sup> Interview with Ina in Port Alberni, April 2009: p.1 of transcript.

<sup>252</sup> Ina and Charlotte, p.16; see Interview with Kathy Robinson, April 2009: p.5-6 of transcript where Kathy remarks on men listening to women.

understanding, they were demeaned and undervalued by many of the merchant sailors who saw them briefly and, like many travellers abroad sighting the exotic, assumed they were easy targets. Meares, who spent time amongst the Mowachaht, discovered women were:

... found to be necessary to sooth a conqueror, or to purchase a favourable article in a treaty. Indeed the privileges which the chiefs profess of having as many wives as they please, may, perhaps, have arisen from an experience of the political purpose to which female charms may be applied in peace or in war.<sup>253</sup>

Women were not passive participants in trade negotiations as they were particularly keen to bargain for essential utensils to improve their everyday lives. Meares recognised the important role women played in political and trade negotiations, even to the extent of delaying transactions and negotiations in order to procure a more favourable outcome: 'The women, in particular, would play us a thousand tricks, and treat the discovery of their finesse with an arch kind of pleasantry that baffled reproach.'<sup>254</sup>

The 1790s signified a time of international diplomacy marking the peak years for coastal fur-trading as nearly 30 ships involved in trading enterprises wintered in Nootka Sound and Clayoquot Sound to the south.<sup>255</sup> However, by the turn of the century few traders visited the west-coast as sea-otter pelts had become scarce and the centre of trade had moved north. Nootka Sound, no longer at the forefront of trading activities, began to slip into historical obscurity. For barely twenty years Nootka Sound had witnessed economic enterprises, the introduction of ideas and technologies, and changes to social patterns and thinking; for the Nuu'Chah'Nulth the effects were momentous. The reduction in economic activity allowed Maquinna time to re-establish his authority in the area, monopolising the trade with the few ships anchoring in Nootka Sound. The arrival of the 'Boston' on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1803 was a rare occurrence. Following verbal insults and a physical attack from Captain Salter, Maquinna saw an opportunity to regain political status. He captured the 'Boston' with its full trading cargo of muskets, powder and cloth, killing most of the crew and, although status was restored, the consequence meant fewer ships trading in the area. For the next two and a half years John Jewitt, one of the two survivors, documents his observations on life at Yuquot, the seasonal shifts of residence and the different visiting groups. His journal has been frequently used as the basis for reconstructing traditional Nuu'Chah'Nulth life and culture, but his observations often contrast sharply with those recorded 25 years earlier by Cook. Jewitt's account of his time with Maquinna chronicles his two and a half years of captivity, an enforced stay at Nootka

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<sup>253</sup> Meares' Journal; September 1788: p.268.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> June, 1788; p.142.

<sup>255</sup> By March 1795 the Spanish had abandoned their settlement and within a year all evidence of Spanish presence had all but disappeared.

Sound, so his observations reflect the conditions under which he was writing, 'an entertaining adventure tale of survival and a rare source of information on the Aboriginal societies of the North West Coast,'<sup>256</sup> a personal narrative and, therefore, a subjective account. Despite inconsistencies in his tale, Jewitt reflects on values and perceptions from a different era, expressing a sensitive and perceptive attitude to Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, unusual for Europeans at that time. Jewitt depicts the people as spiritual and devout, believing in one god; he also disputes the common lore regarding the wanton sexuality of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, as he believed it was the female slaves who performed this duty, usually unwillingly, 'contrary to the beliefs of merchant sailors.'<sup>257</sup>

European views of First Nations in general, and the Nuu'Chah'Nulth in particular, did much to determine the nature of relationships between the two cultures. As Cook has been recognised as the first European to 'discover' the west-coast, his journals, the first documented account of European presence in Nootka Sound, have tended to become the authoritative benchmark for historians and a handbook for travellers, although he only spent a month in Nootka Sound refitting and restocking his ship. Since Cook had sailed to the Pacific via New Zealand and the Hawaiian Islands, comparisons were and have continued to be made between the two groups of Aboriginal people, their customs, traditions, culture and way of life. Meares compares the two peoples very unfavourably expressing his desire to quickly return to the 'genial climate, the luxurious abundance, and the gratifying pleasures of the Sandwich Islands [away from] the nauseating customs' of the people of Nootka Sound.<sup>258</sup> Ensign Walker, on the other hand, expresses concern for the people he observes, attempting to balance optimistic comments with negative European thinking.

This picture of Savage Society (however) is not unamiable and presents many of the kindest traits of our nature. I fear it has not improved since their intercourse with Europeans.<sup>259</sup>

Relationships and communications between the Nuu'Chah'Nulth and Europeans are influenced by the writings of Cook et al with preconceptions and dilemmas concerning Aboriginal people becoming deeply entrenched in peoples' thinking.

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<sup>256</sup> *White Slaves of Maquinna*: John R. Jewitt's Narrative of Capture and Confinement at Nootka (2005) Heritage House Publishing Company, Surrey, BC, originally published in 1815; at least 23 editions of the narrative have appeared since; the book title is also a name change from the original; the word Nootka has been omitted as the word Nuu'Chah'Nulth is now preferred; quote from the Introduction p.8; John Jewitt had boarded the 'Boston' as an armourer at the rate of \$30 a month.

<sup>257</sup> Jewitt, J.R. *White Slaves of Maquinna*, p.8; it is difficult to find documentary evidence of this behaviour; it appears to be an assumption, often based on perceptions and knowledge passed between travellers and traders – folklore.

<sup>258</sup> Meares' Journal. *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789*; see also comments made by Ensign Walker in his journal of his Voyage to the Northwest Coast in 1785 & 1786, FN248: p.86.

<sup>259</sup> Fisher, R. & Bumsted, J. (Eds.) *An Account of a Voyage to the North West Coast*: p.88.

## Cannibalism

The practice of cannibalism and the misunderstandings generated by what actually happened and what was perceived to have occurred stands out clearly as an issue affording debate. With today's knowledge and understanding, two centuries later, 'cannibalistic practices' could be considered a misinterpretation of ceremonial customs.<sup>260</sup> It was reported people possessed human heads and hands for bartering and trade. The Nuu'Chah'Nulth were very aware of the effects and anxieties these body parts had on the Europeans but, similar to their trading practices, they manipulated European fear to their advantage as a ploy to obtain good bargaining positions and a competitive edge in trade negotiations.

Mozino wrote in 1792: 'From the consistent reports that the Spaniards and Boston men have given us, it appears to be proved in an incontestable manner that these savages have been cannibals.'<sup>261</sup> Note the words 'have been' cannibals. Mozino indicates this particular practice happened in the past, and was not part of Nuu'Chah'Nulth culture at the end of the eighteenth century. In the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of his journal, Ensign Walker<sup>262</sup> identifies reasons why it was believed these people were cannibals but 'not in the extensive sense of eating human beings for the sake of food and to gratify hunger'. Walker writes: 'this disgusting practice was ... confined to the devouring their enemies and probably some choice bits only were selected.'<sup>263</sup> The idea of cannibalism was being used as a strategy for 'blackening the reputations of rivals' as chiefs from around the Nootka Sound area jockeyed for favour with the Europeans.<sup>264</sup>

The cannibalism debate continues into the twenty-first century. There is a story, the story of the 'Gum Witch Lady', a tale from Nuu'Chah'Nulth oral history, a fable about cannibalism that is told to children to warn them about strangers, of not speaking to strangers.<sup>265</sup> More importantly the story stresses children are the lynch-pin of family life that

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<sup>260</sup> Meares claimed Maquinna was a cannibal as he had seen him sucking blood from a wound on his leg and declaring it to taste good: from Meares *Voyages* p.257; Fisher R. *Contact and Conflict*, p.75; it is interesting to note Cook, after a month at Nootka, could find no evidence the people were cannibals; see Fisher, R. & Bumsted, J. *An Account of the Voyage to the North West Coast*, pp81-84.

<sup>261</sup> Mozino, Jose M. *Noticias de Nutka*, p22; Esteban Jose Martinez, head of the Spanish expedition to Nootka in 1789, recorded in his diary on September 30<sup>th</sup> 'the chiefs are accustomed, when there is a scarcity of fish, to eat the boys they take as prisoners'.

<sup>262</sup> Ensign Alexander Walker of the Bombay Army, 1764-1831, wrote *An Account of a Voyage to the North West Coast of America, with Observations on the Manners of the Inhabitants and on the Production of that Country in 1785 and 1786*; it has been reproduced from the unpublished manuscript in the National Library of Scotland (Ms 13780); Walker wrote 3-4 pages on cannibalism.

<sup>263</sup> Fisher, R. & Bumstead, J. M. *An Account of a Voyage to the North West Coast*, p.81.

<sup>264</sup> Inglis, R. & Haggarty, J.C. 'Cook to Jewitt: Three Decades of Change in Nootka Sound' in Hoover, A.L. (Ed) *Nuu'Chah'Nulth Voices*: p.96.

<sup>265</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009: pp9-10 of transcript; The Gum Witch Lady story has a strong message for children.

traditions and ceremonies could not be maintained if children are harmed as they are important to the continuation of life. If children are not cared for, the Gum Witch Lady captures them, hangs them in her cottage and eats them when she is hungry. There is a happy ending as a handsome young man rescues the children, killing the heart of Gum Witch Lady. During the recounting of this tale, I was told firmly, the Nuu'Chah'Nulth had never been cannibals it was just a story with a strong moral.

They were not cannibals and they didn't do sacrifices either. There was no such thing as sacrifices. However ... if someone had done wrong ... they had their own policing who would take care of business. It was like a secretive organisation within the community that would look after the community.<sup>266</sup>

The certainty surrounding this statement was confirmed later: 'no, there is no evidence of cannibalism, none at all amongst the Nuu'Chah'Nulth.'<sup>267</sup>

## Journal Writings

Many people consider Cook's journals to be the benchmark from which to reference their own experiences, but what of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, where is their story? Where are the observations made by Chief Maquinna? There are no written records but the oral histories of these events have been passed down through generations, and who is to say these stories are not historical evidence. Richard Inglis<sup>268</sup> and James Haggerty,<sup>269</sup> in discussing the years between Cook and Jewitt, stress the thirty years of change for the Nuu'Chah'Nulth from their perspective, raising questions about the authenticity of peoples' understanding of change. They remark on the notion writings about aboriginal life in historical documents<sup>270</sup> and artefacts collected during expeditions to the northwest coast at the end of the nineteenth century, relate to an essentially traditional culture, assumptions still held today.<sup>271</sup> It is these suppositions that need questioning as 'anthropologists and historians have misinterpreted the magnitude and intensity of cultural change in the first decades of recorded history' at Nootka Sound.<sup>272</sup> Consider the following:

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<sup>266</sup> Jackie Watts, p.13 of transcript.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., p.14.

<sup>268</sup> Richard Inglis is an anthropologist who formerly worked at the Royal BC Museum. He now works as a treaty negotiator with the BC Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. More importantly he has worked extensively with the Nuu'Chah'Nulth people and has served as a consultant to many Nuu'Chah'Nulth First Nations.

<sup>269</sup> James Haggerty is an archaeologist who has directed & co-directed many projects within Nuu'Chah'Nulth territory. He worked for 18 years at the Royal BC Museum; he is owner of Shoreline Archaeological Services & a principal of Traditions Consulting Services. He is co-editor of *Brooks Peninsula: An Ice Age Refugium on Vancouver Island (1997)*.

<sup>270</sup> Ships logs, diaries, Indian Agent reports, records, journals.

<sup>271</sup> Inglis, R. & Haggerty, J. C. *Cook to Jewitt: Three Decades of Change in Nootka Sound*; Cole, D. (1985) *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artefacts* University of Washington Press, Seattle.

<sup>272</sup> Inglis & Haggerty *Cook to Jewitt* p.92.

... then all of a sudden ... people from another world came with such different ways of doing and very different thoughts of how life is and [they] come from a place where you have absolutely no idea or concept of what it is ... they have such a strong influence and there are changes, change in diet and behaviour and diseases.<sup>273</sup>

It is easy to see within this profound statement the remarkable transformations occurring when the Europeans arrived, changes reflected in peoples' thinking and understanding but not recognised by the new arrivals. As Nu'u'Chah'Nulth Elders narrate their histories, validity is achieved through orality, through *ha-huu-pa*, becoming a shared knowledge passed down through generations, providing the secure foundation of what it means to be Nu'u'Chah'Nulth.<sup>274</sup>

Early journal writings fail to reflect or even recognise the complexities of social structures within Nu'u'Chah'Nulth society for a number of reasons: lack of understanding of the language; the reluctance of the First Nations to divulge information, tending to tell Europeans what they wanted or expected to hear rather than what was actually true; misunderstanding of the political organisation and economic viability of Nu'u'Chah'Nulth society; the strengths and roles of the women within the socio-economic structure of the communities; the assumption the people lacked any concept of religion. First Nation traditions were misunderstood. The ceremonial dances of Nu'u'Chah'Nulth women so scandalised the Europeans that descriptions of them were often omitted from journals. However, the role of women in trading and bartering provides an interesting feature within journal writing with frequent references to the strengths and resourcefulness women exerted in trade dealings with both islanders and visitors. As women were being seen in unaccustomed roles, the assertiveness of women within trading enterprises, a marked difference to European women, was worth noting.

From the very first meetings between the Nu'u'Chah'Nulth and Europeans, layers of misunderstandings appeared in reports from unskilled observers imposing their own prejudices and misinterpretations on what they were seeing, and many did not notice or appreciate the changes their presence caused. What materialised was a mixture of information with many gaps in comprehending Nu'u'Chah'Nulth culture. Reasons can be cited: some traders had no wish to record their observations or impressions because of the questionable legality of their enterprises; others believed there was little to write about or to study, as knowledge of this different culture was unlikely to be beneficial to developing civilisation or believed.

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<sup>273</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, May 2009: p.5 of transcript.

<sup>274</sup> *Hu-huu-pa* means teachings.

However, not all records and reports were the result of unskilled observers. In 1792, Jose Mozino Suarez de Figueroa, a scientist, naturalist and the official botanist appointed by the viceroy of New Spain, accompanied the Spanish Commandant, Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra, to Nootka Sound. This area of Vancouver Island proved to be of great scientific interest, and Mozino was one of the first people to spend time in the area solely for the purpose of observation, not just the flora and fauna, but also the people and their language, continuing a Spanish tradition dating back to the mid sixteenth century, when data on the languages and customs of the people they met and conquered, was collected systematically. Although Mozino had little field experience, his accounts attest to his scientific and linguistic abilities; his descriptions of Nuu'Chah'Nulth culture and the people are detailed, his keen observational skills enabling him to write a comprehensive, ethnographical account.

### Observations of Nuu'Chah'Nulth Women

During his stay Mozino became a fluent language speaker enabling him to interact with the people leading to greater understanding of their society. Even more importantly, Mozino observes Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, their function in the community and ceremonies, their economic role, his detailed descriptions contributing considerably to early recorded observations on women. Mozino asserts: "I believe I am the first person who has been able to gather such information, and this was because I learned their language sufficiently to converse with them."<sup>275</sup>

According to Mozino, women braided their hair using the inner bark of cedar trees, wore clothes made of woven cedar fibres and adorned themselves with many bracelets and anklets.<sup>276</sup> Women had their ears pierced when very young, hanging 'various threads or bands' knotted separately with 'little doubled metal plates of copper in the form of a cylinder from an inch and a half to two inches in length.'<sup>277</sup> He comments on women's complexions noting the women 'are not as dark as the Mexicans [but having] a tender rose color' in their faces.<sup>278</sup> Mozino considers the opportunity for women to have access to a variety of colours taken from a range of local plants to be a luxury,<sup>279</sup> comparing Nuu'Chah'Nulth women very favourably with European women.

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<sup>275</sup> Mozino, Jose M. (1792/1991) *Noticias de Nutka*: p.9: Mozino refers to members of the Mowachaht band (a confederacy at that time) that inhabited Nootka Sound; see also Drucker, P. (1965) *Cultures of the North Pacific Coast*, Chandler Publishing Co., San Francisco.

<sup>276</sup> Mozino, J. M. *Noticias de Nutka* p.10-16 detailed descriptions of dress and habits of the women.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid., p.11; mentioned in Interview with Jackie, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009: p.15 of transcript.

<sup>278</sup> Mozino, J. M. *Noticias de Nutka* p.11.

<sup>279</sup> Cook is unimpressed with the colourful potions women use to decorate their bodies (Mozino p.12).

The whiteness of the skin appeared almost to equal that of Europeans; though rather of that pale effete cast which distinguishes those of our southern nations.<sup>280</sup> Both Cook and Mozino appear to be astonished by the countenance of the women, their complexions being so similar to southern European women, observations challenging established preconceptions.<sup>281</sup> Meares remarks on the colours used by the women and the use of facial decorations.

Their long black hair hangs down their back; but they are not allowed to employ any other paint but of a red colour, which, however, they use in great profusion. We observed very few of them who were adorned with a nose or ear decorations.<sup>282</sup> James Colnett,<sup>283</sup> an associate of John Meares, also kept records of his encounters with the Nuu'Chah'Nulth. He professed his preference of living amongst the Muchalaht rather than at Yuquot during his first expedition to the area,<sup>284</sup> however, he is very reticent on the topic of women commenting only that the 'women have a great share of Modesty.'<sup>285</sup> Archibald Menzies, the ship's surgeon, also attests to the 'friendship ... civility and Kindness'<sup>286</sup> of those he encountered during his stay. However, the records are unclear as to the type of relationship intimated between the local women and the crew. From the comments recorded in journals of women's modesty, it would suggest relationships would probably have been between crew members and female slaves, women captured following skirmishes between the different bands on the island.

Ensign Alexander Walker, who made two voyages to the northwest coast in 1785 and 1786, provides further information about the lives of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth. He notes the men not only treated their women well but relationships between men and women were affectionate, content with one another, as he often found them sitting amicably together. Within their long houses places are allocated to married people, and women take great pride and care in arranging their ornaments, and in seeing their husbands richly dressed. Walker's written observations carefully detail the manner and demeanour of the women: when the

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<sup>280</sup> Cook, J. *A voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, Book 1V, Chapter 2, p.303; detail written towards the end of Cook's stay at Nootka Sound, 26<sup>th</sup> April 1778, on women's countenance.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid., Book 1V, Chapter 2, p.303.

<sup>282</sup> Meares' Journal, Chapter XXIII: September 1788, p.254.

<sup>283</sup> James Colnett 1753-1806 was one of the British navigators who sailed in the wake of James Cook to the NW Coast in pursuit of sea-otter furs. He is best known for his second voyage 1789-1792 during which he was captured by Esteban Martinez, a Spanish commandant, at Nootka Sound. These actions precipitated the Anglo-Spanish Nootka Crisis of 1790 culminating in Spain's withdrawal from the West Coast of Vancouver Island.

<sup>284</sup> Galois, R. M. 'Nuu'Chah'Nulth Encounters: James Colnett's Expedition of 1787-88' in Hoover, A.L. (Eds.)(2000) *Nuu'Chah'Nulth Voices, Histories, Objects & Journeys*, Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria: pp69-91.

<sup>285</sup> Galois, R. M. *Nuu'Chah'Nulth Encounters*, p.76.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., p.76; Archibald Menzies was the surgeon on the *Prince of Wales*.



men are absent the white men are shut out of the houses, the doors barricaded with chests and planks. He perceives this to be a reflection on the modesty of the women, their fear of having to confront the white man. It was a method of 'freeing themselves from our coarse importunities.'<sup>287</sup> However, Walker realises, once the women were better acquainted with the visitors, they were never shut out. Although Walker observes the men 'show no sense of decency', he quickly asserts the conduct of women to be very different, reaffirming Cook's comments.

Their reserve and Modesty have been deservedly applauded by Captain Cook. ... the behaviour of the Women was uniformly exemplary. Their simplicity, decency and purity of manners, would have done honour to any People.<sup>288</sup>

Cook is very aware his observations are based solely upon a few hours spent in the company of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women; however his comments are noteworthy.

The women were always properly clothed, and behaved with the utmost propriety, justly deserving of all commendations for a bashfulness and modesty becoming their sex; but the more meritorious in them, as the men seem to have no sense of shame.<sup>289</sup>

Walker's journal examines the manner in which women were viewed by the visitors raising the idea that banter between men and women, the ways they communicated with each other was, in fact, a technique designed to 'raise a laugh against' the British.<sup>290</sup> He appreciates his descriptions, a revision of his first impressions, were contrary to the general character expected of the First Nations, but is keen to record Nuu'Chah'Nulth women seemed superior in their morals, were less licentious in their customs, and the men made every effort to protect the virtue of their women who were modest and timid in their behaviour. He wrote: 'women are always decently clothed and seemed to be bashful and modest.'<sup>291</sup> Walker seems to reveal greater sensitivity to the problems of European observations than most of his contemporary witnesses although Cook, Meares, and Jewitt did reach similar conclusions towards the end of their journals. Jewitt, in particular, argued it was the female slaves of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth

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<sup>287</sup> From an account of a voyage to the NW Coast of America with observations on the manners of the inhabitants & on the production of that country in 1785 & 1786 by Ensign Alexander Walker of the Bombay Army: descriptions of Nuu'Chah'Nulth social life and customs: reproduced from an unpublished manuscript in the National Library of Scotland (MS13780); referenced in the First Nations Library, University of British Columbia, Vancouver: pp84-86.

<sup>288</sup> Fisher, R. & Bumsted, J. M. *An Account of the Voyage*, p.85-86: reproduced from the unpublished manuscript in the National Library of Scotland, (Ms 13780).

<sup>289</sup> Cook, J. *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, Book 1V, Chapter 3, p.319; descriptions written at the end of Cook's stay at Nootka Sound as they were preparing to leave the area to continue their journey north, 26<sup>th</sup> April 1778.

<sup>290</sup> Fisher, R. & Bumsted, J. *An Account of the Voyage*, p.87.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, p.85; p.248 note 245 words attributed to Cook.

who were prostituted by their masters not the Nuu'Chah'Nulth women.<sup>292</sup> Meares agrees with Walker: Nuu'Chah'Nulth women 'are reserved and chaste, and examples of loose and immodest conduct were very rare among them.'<sup>293</sup> As the time for leaving drew near, Meares and his crew were approached by a small group of women, two young and two middle-aged.

The beauty of their countenances was so powerful as to predominate over the oil and red ochre which, in great measure, covered them. [One] displayed so sweet an air of diffidence and modesty. [The women] were very superior in personal charms ... and professed a degree of modesty which is not often to be found among the savage nations. No entreaty or temptations in our power could prevail on them to venture on board the ship.<sup>294</sup>

He continues, remarking on the opportunity of seeing 'an instance of their delicacy, which, from its singularity may not be thought unworthy.'<sup>295</sup> As one reads Meares' journal, recalling over two hundred years have passed since it was written, the meticulous observations of the women are a delight to read and his observations are corroborated by recent comments:

Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, the ladies, historically they were modest ladies, and they are empowering their daughters and their granddaughters; they are giving them the strength and a strong sense of who they are and their role in life.<sup>296</sup>

By September 1788, Meares had been living amongst the people for a number of months, and his praise is moving: 'There were women ... whom no offers could tempt to meretricious submissions.'<sup>297</sup> Later, when it becomes apparent the women are more comfortable amongst the visitors, Meares sees the women 'sitting in their houses and conversing with their families.'

The women are courteous to Meares, affable to each other, entertaining

... the very correct notion of right and wrong, being confident when acting with rectitude, and diffident when doing anything under an opposite influence. ... In their demeanour to each other, we frequently saw those attentions, and discovered those friendly dispositions which leaves no doubt as to the amiable qualities they possess.<sup>298</sup>

Observations from Jewitt's journal also confirm and attest to the modesty and demeanour of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, mentioning the kindnesses of the women 'who are always very temperate, drinking nothing but water.'<sup>299</sup> Both Walker and Jewitt comment on the women leaving the vicinity to sleep in a cabin behind closed doors for protection, 'so terrified were they at the conduct of the men who all lay stretched out on the floor in a state of complete

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<sup>292</sup> Mentioned in the journals including: *White Slaves of Maquinna: John R. Jewitt's Narrative of Capture and Confinement at Nootka*, reproduced from the original manuscript, 1815: p.87.

<sup>293</sup> Meares' Journal, Chapter XXIII, p.251.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., Monday 16<sup>th</sup> June 1788; p.140.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid., Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> June 1788; pp148-149.

<sup>296</sup> Interview with Eileen, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.3 of transcript.

<sup>297</sup> Meares' Journal, September 1788: p.251; see also Fisher, R. & Bumsted, J. *An Account*, pp85-86.

<sup>298</sup> Meares' Journal, September 1788; p.255.

<sup>299</sup> Jewitt, J. *White Slaves of Maquinna* p.55.

intoxication.<sup>300</sup> Jewitt, when he notices women leaving the village, remarks they were 'prompted by a sentiment of decency, to retire for the purpose of bathing, as they were remarkably modest.'<sup>301</sup> Although Jewitt readily leaves his wife when he is rescued, his descriptions of her are very agreeable, finding her to be 'amiable and intelligent.'<sup>302</sup> These positive journal portrayals of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women attest to their modesty and gentle demeanour.

### **The Economic Role of Nuu'Chah'Nulth Women**

Women's economic role, noted by Ensign Walker, provides us with unique glimpses into their working lives. Nuu'Chah'Nulth women are employed in preserving fish, making cloth and in taking care of the children; women assisted in unloading cargoes of fish from canoes and collecting shell fish from beaches. Walker distinguishes between the roles of the Elders and the young women having noticed women who are past child-bearing or are very poor go fishing whereas the younger wives are never employed in any laborious work being entrusted with the care of their husbands' valuables, securing them within chests by means of ingeniously knotted string. His observation of the division of labour amongst women is interesting; it is lower class women, those who are poor, and those who work for esteemed families who engage in heavy work whereas young women with families spend their time in childcare activities. However, Walker is quick to recognise women are never inactive as they are constantly employed in necessary family and community tasks.<sup>303</sup>

The activities of cooking, bringing in wood and water are carried out equally by both men and women; water is carried in square wooden boxes or vessels so well constructed they are perfectly water-tight. From this division of labour and all other observed circumstances, it appeared to Walker the women at Nootka were 'highly esteemed and treated with as much tenderness as in most civilised countries of Europe.' Accordingly, there appeared to be only one distinction in favour of men – the canoe paddles used by the women were smaller. Walker includes a delightful comment when he writes: 'the women however never lounge like the men.'<sup>304</sup> He is very perceptive about the division of roles and time spent in economic activities saying, although the people appear to have a great deal of leisure time, particularly the men, there were times and seasons when the people worked very hard to ensure their survival.

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<sup>300</sup> Ibid., p.55.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., p.156.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., p.147; Jewitt's wife is believed to be Maquinna's daughter.

<sup>303</sup> Fisher, R. & Bumsted, J. *An Account of the Voyage*, pp84-86.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., pp84-85.

Although Cook's observations of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women were limited compared to those of others, he does notice and remark upon women's industrious nature.

The women were occupied in manufacturing their flaxen or woollen garments, and in preparing the sardines for drying, which they also carry up from the beach in twig-baskets.<sup>305</sup> In most of the homes women were at work, making dresses of the plant or bark ... which they executed exactly in the same manner that the New Zealanders manufacture their cloth. ... Others were occupied in opening sardines.<sup>306</sup>

The artist, John Webber,<sup>307</sup> furnishes us with pictorial evidence of women's skills. In one of his pictures, he meticulously depicts the interior of a communal long house with women weaving finely crafted clothes and baskets from cedar, the monochrome wash clearly illustrating the finer detail of their weaving.<sup>308</sup>

Meares' journal contains many instances of women's roles: how women boil water for cooking fish by using tongs to convey hot stones; serve food and replenish dishes at meal times; make clothes from the 'bark of the trees and the filament of a nettle prepared in a particular manner.'<sup>309</sup> Meares observes women peeling bark from a tree to be used as towels, selling crayfish, berries, wild onions, salads, other succulent plants to his crew, and 'an occasional piece of venison also heightened the luxury of our table.'<sup>310</sup> He is obviously very impressed with the range of employment opportunities, the variety of women's skills, particularly weaving, so dedicates Chapter XXIV of his journal to his observations.

[They are] very expert at this business [of weaving] which is one of their principal employments; this garment, from its close contexture, is warm, and when new and clean, is rather of an elegant appearance; especially when its edges are trimmed with a narrow fringe of the sea-otters skin.<sup>311</sup>

The details are intricate descriptions of clothing fashioned by the women. Women's hats were conical, a contrast to men's which are adorned with feathers and down of birds, reflecting customs the people rigidly observe when approaching strangers. However, representations of these hats appears to have changed since that time as it is men who are now portrayed

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<sup>305</sup> Cook, J. *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, Book 1V, Chapter 3; Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1778: p.318; see also Fisher, R. & Bumsted, J. *An Account*, p.84.

<sup>306</sup> Cook, J. *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, Book 1V, Chapter 1, Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April, 1778; p.280.

<sup>307</sup> John Webber travelled with Cook and illustrated the Journals: ... *with a variety of Portraits of Persons, views of places and historical Representations of Remarkable incidents, drawn by Mr Webber during the Voyage, and engraved by the most eminent Artist*; words from Cook's Journals; The sketches and drawings are situated in a large portfolio of monochrome wash and pencil sketches and pictures in British Library.

<sup>308</sup> The Nuu'Chah'Nulth women based their elaborate weaving culture on the locally grown cedar, a wood also used for their substantial and permanent cedar plank houses.

<sup>309</sup> Meares' Journal., Chapter XXIV: September 1788; pp251-252; also mentioned in Fisher, R. & Bumsted, J. *An Account of the Voyage*, p.83.

<sup>310</sup> Meares' Journal, Saturday June 14<sup>th</sup> & Tuesday June 17<sup>th</sup> 1788: pp139-141; Fisher, R. & Bumsted, J. *An Account of the Voyage*, p.84.

<sup>311</sup> Meares' Journal, Chapter XXIV: September 1788; pp251-252; the trees were cedar and spruce.

wearing these conical hats. Where the idea arose that conical hats were men's hats is unknown as today women are represented with unadorned heads, and the intricate conical hats sit upon the men.<sup>312</sup>

Nuu'Chah'Nulth women cleaned and prepared sea-otter skins, stretching the skins on frames, an action the women 'perform with habitual ingenuity.'<sup>313</sup> Meares' detail about women is illuminating and needs, I believe, to be written verbatim as his words present a vibrant picture, clarity and insight into women's work in the communities.

Every branch of culinary science, as well as of the household economy, is likewise committed to them; and it is among their duties to keep watch during the night, in order to alarm the men in case of any sudden incursion of an enemy. They not only dress the provisions for the day, but prepare the stores for winter sustenance. The garments, made from the bark of trees, are of female manufacture. They also collect the wild fruits and excellent plants that are found in the woods, or take the shell-fish, which are in great plenty among the rocks, or on the sea-side. When the canoes return from their little voyages, they are employed in unlading them of their cargoes, hauling them on the beach, and covering them with branches of the pine, as a protection from the weather.<sup>314</sup>

Meares considers the importance of the sea in their lives, how it provides an abundance of food and work for the Nuu'Chah'Nulth: the sea is 'a great market for their food' and the Nuu'Chah'Nulth utilise this vast resource the whole year as 'ice seldom precludes people having access to the sea and fishing.'<sup>315</sup> Nevertheless, he also notes how they take many precautions to ensure food is collected, prepared, and stored for the whole year, in order to alleviate any distress and limitations that may occur with a bad harvest.

Whatever food is capable of being preserved, they [the women] do not fail to prepare for the colder seasons of the year. Even the spawn of fish is considered as a winter store.<sup>316</sup>

The women prepare and preserve food in the autumn: for example, using fish bladders for salmon roe, a kind of caviar considered a delicacy in both its dry and raw state.<sup>317</sup> During his stay, Meares often found the village empty of people during the day as the women would be away gathering berries from the forests, or traversing the sand and rocks in search of clams, crayfish and shellfish, always industrious.

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid., Chapter XXIV; September 1788: p.254; pictorial evidence from the Sketches by John Webber, 1790, located in the British Library; artist John Webber sailed with Cook portrays the women wearing conical hats.

<sup>313</sup> Meares' Journal, Chapter XXIV, September 1788: p.265; see also Fisher, R. & Bumsted, J. *An Account of the Voyage*, p.84.

<sup>314</sup> Meares' Journal, Chapter XXIV, September 1788: p.266.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid., Chapter XXIV, September 1788: p.266.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., Chapter XXIV, September 1788: pp266-267.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid., Chapter XXIV, September 1788: pp266-267.

## Nuu'Chah'Nulth Women's Skills and Attributes

Meares remarks upon women's maternal duties, stressing how affectionate women are to each other, to their husbands, and to their children, comparing what he is observing with European conventions of the time rather than his expectations.

They have also their conjugal and maternal duties; nor shall we be so unjust as not to mention that the women of Nootka are tender mothers and affectionate wives: indeed we have beheld instances of fondness for their children, and regard for their husbands, which mark the influence of those sensibilities that form the chief honour of the female character amongst the most polished nations of the globe.<sup>318</sup>

Cook is impressed with women's physical skills, and writes positively about women's prowess in managing canoes:

The women are sent in the small canoes to gather muscles, and other shell-fish, and perhaps on some other occasions, for they manage these with as much dexterity as the men.<sup>319</sup>

Nuu'Chah'Nulth women were very proficient at canoeing. With men absent for weeks at a time, they needed to be able to handle canoes proficiently for fishing, travelling, and moving goods for storage. Women's excellent canoeing abilities are also noted by Meares who professes his astonishment at their skills.

Among other visitors to the ship, we were one day very much surprised by the appearance of a canoe paddled along by women and containing about twenty of that sex, without a single person of the other.<sup>320</sup>

In the 1950s, Drucker expresses similar sentiments, recording the people are good natured, live open and friendly terms with one another, and did not see the necessity to quarrel with or abuse one another, sentiments remarked upon by Walker.<sup>321</sup>

According to Drucker, the Nuu'Chah'Nulth strongly disapproved of aggressive behaviour outside of warfare. Mildness of temper was considered an admirable characteristic and the use of violence to resolve personal disagreements was considered to be a deplorable breakdown in human relations and behaviour. Drucker joins a growing number of observers who mention the modesty of the women, the respect shown to women, and the important role they held in their communities.

## Political Dynamics

At the time when the Nuu'Chah'Nulth met European visitors many complex territorial and socio-economic/socio-political changes transpired. It was a time when internal dynamics were

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<sup>318</sup> Ibid., Chapter XXIV, September 1788: p.266.

<sup>319</sup> Cook, J. *A voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, Book 1V, Chapter 3, Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1778; p.318; see Fisher, R. & Bumsted, J. *An Account of the Voyage*, p.85.

<sup>320</sup> Meares' Journal, June 1788, p.149.

<sup>321</sup> Philip Drucker (1951) *The Northern and Central Nootkan Tribes*: taken from field notes on his visits to Vancouver Island; Fisher, R. & Bumsted, J. *An Account of the Voyage*, pp84-85.

constantly changing: population numbers began to decline due to imported diseases and increasing inter-tribal warfare resulting in widespread manoeuvring for political position and status on a scale previously unheard of in Nuuchah-Nulth society. It is difficult from today's vantage point to ascertain local family rankings as they changed so frequently.<sup>322</sup> However, even with limited records, it is possible to appreciate lifestyles and culture. With the decline of the maritime fur-trade, Nuuchah-Nulth life reverted back to earlier times but with subtle changes. The people had become wealthy through trading, acquired new and useful accoutrements to their lives, and had experienced considerable control over both trade and power relationships between themselves and Europeans. The fur-trade did not introduce change into a static society; it was, like any other society, constantly evolving, subsuming new ideas when appropriate. By the standards of the time, Maquinna had become wealthy: at a potlatch in 1803, it is reported Chief Maquinna 'dispensed no less than 100 muskets, the same number of looking glasses, 400 yards of cloth, and 20 casks of powder.'<sup>323</sup> The Nuuchah-Nulth were not passive recipients or targets of exploitation; they were an active part of a mutually beneficial trading relationship, intelligent and energetic traders capable of driving a hard bargain. From journal evidence and supporting interview material, it has already been possible to identify strengths and characteristics of Nuuchah-Nulth women: their adeptness in negotiating skills, their adaptability and adjustments in dealing with changes to lifestyle with the introductions of new technologies, their modesty, respect, and prestige in society, their weaving, food preparation and preservation skills. Despite these visitors to their lands continuity and traditions are maintained, and the Nuuchah-Nulth experienced little cultural disruption at this time.

Such was the complex tapestry of the Nuuchah-Nulth people before the imposition of colonisation towards the end of the nineteenth century. However, despite the evidence of a flourishing maritime fur-trade at the turn of the century, the west-coast of Vancouver Island failed to develop as an important trading area, and economic expansion and settlement did not materialise during the early part of the nineteenth century. There also appears to be little historical evidence of change amongst the Nuuchah-Nulth during this time, due to their isolated position. It was to be the arrival of Gilbert Malcolm Sproat in 1860 with the baggage of colonisation, Indian agents, settlers, the 1876 Indian Act and, eventually, residential schooling, that signified momentous change for the Nuuchah-Nulth.

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<sup>322</sup> Fisher, R. *Contact and Conflict*; Arima, E.Y., St. Claire, D., Clamhouse, L., Edgar, J., Jones, C. & Thomas, J. (Eds.)(1991) *Between Ports Alberni and Renfrew: Notes on West Coast Peoples*, Canadian Museum of Civilisation, Ottawa.

<sup>323</sup> John R. Jewitt's *Narratives of Capture and Confinement at Nootka: White Slaves of Maquinna*, (2005) Heritage House Publishing Company, British Columbia Arts Council, p.52.

## Nootka?

Before the meeting of the Nuw'Chah'Nulth with Europeans continues into the mid-nineteenth century, the word 'Nootka' needs consideration since the word is commonly encountered in anthropological, ethnographical and other academic writings, museums and libraries, educational programmes and in schools, travel documents and maps, and has been used throughout this chapter with little or no explanation, an example of the misinterpretation and misuse of language. The word 'Nootka' has been used for 200 years to describe the people who lived around Nootka Sound;<sup>324</sup> it is not an Aboriginal place name.<sup>325</sup>

The error first arose when Captain Cook misunderstood information given to him by the Mowachaht (from the village of Yuquot) when he first sailed into Nootka Sound in 1778.<sup>326</sup> The word is a misnomer, a European name for a particular group of Aboriginal people, arising from the mistaken naming of Nootka Sound by Cook (writing *Nookka* in his journal). Traditionally, the people recall Cook's error arose when he asked for the name of the sound and the people, believing he was asking for directions, replied *No:tka* meaning to circle about, to circle around or to go around.<sup>327</sup> The Mowachaht were referring to an island in Nootka Sound, saying Cook's ship, the Resolution, could sail around the island and anchor with ease so preventing his ship running aground on the reefs: the Mowachaht were giving directions to a safe harbour in their language and Cook misinterpreted what was said understanding the word *Nutka* to mean the name of the people rather than *to 'give way'*. Another explanation is provided by the Spanish navigator Esteban Jose Martinez. His diary entry for September 30<sup>th</sup> 1789 says:

Captain Cook's men, asking by signs what the port was called, made for them a sign with their hand, forming a circle and then dissolving it, to which the natives responded *Nutka*, which means to give way. Cook named it in his Diary *entrada del Rey Jorge o de*

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<sup>324</sup> In ethnological literature its usage has been extended to cover a number of culturally and linguistically related bands living on the west coast of Vancouver Island, south of the Kwakwaka'wakw, and north of the Coast Salish.

<sup>325</sup> The various bands along the west coast of Vancouver Island did not identify themselves collectively in 1778, nor did they have a name for the area; the term Nootka became standard and expanded to include all the people whose cultures, languages, and ways of life are similar; see Daniel Clayton 'Captain Cook and the Spaces of Contact at Nootka Sound' in Brown, J.H. & Vibert, E. (Eds.) (2003) *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Broadview Press Ltd, Ontario: pp133-162; Goodman, L.J. and Swan, H. (2003) *Singing the Songs of my Ancestors: The Life and Music of Helma Swan, Makah Elder*, University of Oklahoma Press.

<sup>326</sup> Goodman & Swan *Singing the Songs*: According to stories told by the elders, the words he heard, *nutksi?a* or *nu:tka:?icim* meant 'go around over there'.

<sup>327</sup> In E.Y. Arima, Denis St. Clair, Louis Clamhouse, Joshua Edgar, Charles Jones & John Thomas (Eds.) (1991) *Between Ports Alberni and Renfrew*: P.6; Brabant in Charles Moser (1890) *Reminiscences of the West Coast of Vancouver Island*, Kakawis, BC; Erikson, P.P. with Helma Ward & Kirk Wachendorf (2002) *Voices of a Thousand People; The Makah Cultural & Research Centre*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln.



*Nutka*,<sup>328</sup> and the rest of the ships have known it by the latter, which is *Nutka*, for which reason they have forced the Indians also to know it by that name.<sup>329</sup>

A further version was suggested by the Spanish naturalist Jose Mariano Mozino in his ethnography account of his visit to Nootka Sound in 1792, shifting the name's application from the inlet to the large island on which Kyuquot village is located:

"I do not know through what error this island has been given the name of Nootka, since natives do not know the word and assure me that they had never heard it until the English began to trade on the island. I suspect that the source of this mistake was the word *Nut-chi*, which means mountain, since what Cook called 'Nootka' has never among these islanders had any name other than *Yuquatl*."<sup>330</sup>

This is not an unreasonable suggestion as Mozino surmises the word *Nootka* could originate from the west-coast word for mountain resonates within modern times as *Nuu'Chah'Nulth* can be taken to mean 'All Along the Mountains', the name in the present orthography being *no:cha:no:1*.<sup>331</sup> Chief Charles Jones has a further explanation, an account that localises the meeting at the Mowachaht summer village at *Yokwa:t* or Friendly Cove.

Nootka is not a correct name. The correct name for the Nootka tribe is Mowach'ath. ... When the first ship came, the people, the Mowach'ath, noticed something coming towards the shore the like of which they had never seen before. ... When it came close enough the chief said 'Go out with a canoe and direct them in clear of the reefs. ... *No:tkshe::! No:tkshi?e:! Ch'a?ak?e:!* Now the white men call them 'Nootka' because they took the word from what the guide said: '*No:tkshit1*', 'Get around'.<sup>332</sup>

The chief meant the ship should go around the island to reach the shore safely, instead of running aground on reefs. Cook and his crew had taken the word *Nootka/No:tkshe:* to refer to the name of the people rather than its true meaning – to go around, to get around. Gilbert Sproat, in 1868, also comments on the word saying, '*Nootkah* ... (whatever that may have come from, for there is now no native name resembling it)',<sup>333</sup> and Edward Sapir refers to the word in his '*Nootka Tales*' saying: 'the term 'Nootka' is somewhat a misnomer'.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>328</sup> Martinez's reference to 'entrada del Rey Jorge o de Nutka' reflects the fact that Cook first named the inlet 'King George Sound' rather than Nootka Sound by which it is now known.

<sup>329</sup> Page 67 note 12 in Mozino (1991) *Noticias de Nutka* – see footnote 6; Meany (*Vancouver's Discovery of Puget Sound* p45-46) quotes the Belgian missionary Father A. J. Brabant that *not-ka-eh* is a native verb meaning 'go – around' and surmises that the Spaniards confused the word for the name of the village & so adopted it for the harbour.

<sup>330</sup> Jose Mariano Mozino *Noticias de Nutka: An Account of Nootka Sound in 1792* –was published in 1970 as an American Ethnological Society Monograph 50: p.67.

<sup>331</sup> Ha-Shilth-Sa (1978) *Nuu'Chah'Nulth-Aht not Nootka*: 10<sup>th</sup> November 1978, Port Alberni; P.4; In 1978, the political organisation representing the various bands along the west coast changed its name from 'West Coast District Council' to 'Nuu'Chah'Nulth Tribal Council'.

<sup>332</sup> Meaning/translation: 'Get 'rounnnnnd! Get around! The island!' said by Chief Charles Jones, one of the co-editors of '*Between Ports Alberni and Renfrew: Notes on West Coast Peoples*' (1991).

<sup>333</sup> Sproat, Gilbert M. *Scenes and Studies of Savage Life*, Chapter III, Localities, p.11.

<sup>334</sup> Sapir, Edward writes '*locally used only of Indians of Nootka Sound but in ethnographical literature has been extended to cover a number of culturally and linguistically related tribes living on the west coast of*

Even today the place and the people are still called Nootka, the word is still found in educational books and magazines in schools, the word is still heard and used in schools, and encountered in academic writings. Other similar explanations of the word Nootka can be found<sup>335</sup> but suffice to say it is easy to appreciate the misunderstandings that originally occurred. Maybe what is not as easy to understand is the continued misuse and misunderstanding of the word two centuries later. The discourse surrounding the mis-spelling of key words enhances the sense of cultural misunderstanding, and the discussion and various interpretations is indicative of the complexity of cross-cultural communications and challenges faced by ethnographers, historians and myself.

‘I’m thinking of my words and my language and translating ... how to say [words]’<sup>336</sup>

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*Vancouver Island, south of the Kwakiutl and north of the Coast Salish*’ in the Introduction of his ‘Nootka Tales’: Sapir, E. & Swadesh, M. (1939) *Nootka Texts: Tales and Ethnological Narratives with Grammatical Notes and Lexical Materials*, The Linguistic Society of America, Yale University, US.

<sup>335</sup> See also George, Chief Earl Maquinna (2003) *Living on the Edge: Nuw’Chah’Nulth History from an Ahousaht Chief’s Perspective*, Sononis Press, Winlaw, BC.

<sup>336</sup> Interview with Genevieve, May 2010: p.16 of transcript.

# Chapter Four: The Beginnings of Settlement, 1860-1893

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The influence in historical times was much more respect given to Aboriginal women. You are seeing that strong thrust and bringing the ladies forward to the place they historically held. I think Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, the ladies, historically were modest ladies.<sup>337</sup>

From 1774 to 1849, Europeans who ventured into the remote areas of Vancouver Island onto Nuu'Chah'Nulth lands were there primarily to trade sea-otter furs, seasonal traders in the maritime fur-trade with little interest in founding settlements or imposing European ways and thinking onto Nuu'Chah'Nulth culture. The people were able to enjoy the economic benefits of trade without the disruptive influences of colonisation. It was a time when European goods became a part of Nuu'Chah'Nulth culture but transactions were not one-sided ventures as the people were not passive recipients of trade goods, quickly recognising and appreciating the differing values of merchandise. Nuu'Chah'Nulth people proved to be expert negotiators in trading so the outlet of a European market for furs brought new wealth turning the white man's desire for valuable furs to their own advantage.<sup>338</sup> However, reciprocal trade advantages did not last as sea-otter numbers declined and Europeans found alternative locations for trading. The Nuu'Chah'Nulth settled back into previous lifestyles as though mamalhn'i had never arrived. It was to change in 1860 with the arrival of Gilbert Malcolm Sproat<sup>339</sup> and white settlers.<sup>340</sup>

Unlike other colonies, Vancouver Island had not been founded for the purpose of relieving overcrowded conditions in Britain or for the settlement of convicts. By 1849, as white settlement was encroaching onto First Nations land,<sup>341</sup> the British government saw the necessity of colonising Vancouver Island in order to confirm British sovereignty with the trading post of Fort Victoria established as the capital.<sup>342</sup> James Douglas was named governor

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<sup>337</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: pp2-3 of transcript; Eileen explained how women were viewed historically, linking these comments to present day perceptions.

<sup>338</sup> Fisher, R. *Contact and Conflict*; Cote, C. *Spirits of our Whaling Ancestors*.

<sup>339</sup> Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, 1834-1913; government agent, Indian reserve commissioner, magistrate and author; Sproat went to the Alberni Inlet to establish a sawmill; he observed first-hand, the collision of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth First Nation and the colonists.

<sup>340</sup> For further discussion see: Fisher, R. *Contact and Conflict*, Cote, C. *Spirits of our Whaling Ancestors*, Harris, C. *Making Native Space*; Hoover, A.L. (Ed.) *Nuu'Chah'Nulth Voices*; Van Kirk, S. *Many Tender Ties*.

<sup>341</sup> Evidence from other parts of British Columbia: See Van Kirk, S. *Many Tender Ties*; Fisher, R. *Contact and Conflict*; Harris, C. *Making Native Space*.

<sup>342</sup> Settlers arrived slowly. By 1852 as few as 435 emigrants had been sent to the new colony, and only eleven had purchased land, with another nineteen applications.

in 1851, a position extended to cover the colony of British Columbia when it came into existence in 1858. The appointment of Douglas by the colonial office, a consequence of the recognition of his long experience in dealing with First Nations, was fortuitous for the people as Douglas applied his experience as a fur-trader to his new responsibilities. Although more of a frontiersman than a colonial government official, Douglas' dual role symbolised the transitional phase from fur-trading to settlement: the arrival of settlers signified 'civilisation'.<sup>343</sup> By the 1850s Vancouver Island had ceased to be an important source for furs and although Victoria was still a market place for trade, it was not until settler numbers increased colonisation began to influence life on the island. Believing First Nations were beginning to understand the purpose of British law, 'the object of which was to protect life and property', Douglas began to apply the British notion of social control on the people,<sup>344</sup> and the basic features of Indian administration were established: settlers, ownership of land, formation of Reserves, all ensured the local population conformed to the laws of the colony – white man's laws.<sup>345</sup> Increased settlement meant competition for and exploitation of land and, in the process, expanding settlement destroyed the successful hunter/gatherer lifestyles of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth. The combination of social control and the taking of land were to have devastating outcomes for the Nuu'Chah'Nulth.

Douglas realised an arrangement was needed for the purchase of the land. He was authorised by the Hudson Bay Company, at his discretion and using his local knowledge, to allow only land that had been cultivated and settled by 1846 to be exempt.<sup>346</sup> All other land was declared waste land available for purchase and settlement: in other words, most of Vancouver Island. Little account was taken of Aboriginal culture and tradition, their respect for the land or their hunter/gatherer way of life. Although the welfare of the people was of concern to Douglas, his hope for these people was to be expressed through Christianity, education and agriculture, the trinity of British colonial policy.

It was to be the arrival of Gilbert Malcolm Sproat<sup>347</sup> in Barkley Sound in August 1860 that brought change to Nuu'Chah'Nulth society; it was traumatic and devastating for the people. Sproat arrived at the head of the fiord, now known as Alberni Canal, with the intention of establishing and managing a logging camp, sawmill and eventually, a settlement. Sproat

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<sup>343</sup> Note: When the word 'civilisation' is used it must be remembered that it is a relatively modern definition imposed upon the past from a western intellectual perspective.

<sup>344</sup> Fisher, R. *Contact and Conflict*, p.65.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid., Harris, C. *Making Native Space*; It was a time when treaties were written to reserve small areas of land for Indian use although ownership and title was retained by the Crown.

<sup>346</sup> The people came under British sovereignty in 1846.

<sup>347</sup> Gilbert Malcolm Sproat: Scottish businessman; also in charge of developing the township of Port Alberni, and of selling land from the Nuu'Chah'Nulth for settlers moving into the area.

explained to the Chief of the Tseshaht land was needed for a new 'civilized settlement',<sup>348</sup> a township called Port Alberni. Although the Tseshaht were adamant their land and water were not for sale, they were told 'their land would be bought at a fair price.'<sup>349</sup> Sproat, believing the land was his as he had already purchased it from the Crown, gave the Aht<sup>350</sup> goods worth twenty pounds, considering the amount to be fair, and ordered the people to find an alternative place to live; in other words, forced displacement. The people quickly predicted the arrival of more white men wanting more land. An Elder succinctly said:

"We ... hear things that make our hearts grow faint. They say more King-George-men will soon be here, and will take our land, our firewood, our fishing grounds; ... we will be placed on a little spot, and will have to do everything according to the fancies of the King-George-men."<sup>351</sup>

Interestingly, the negotiation process, although appearing to be one-sided, illustrates an understanding of territorial ownership as the Tseshaht, in an attempt to protect their land, said: 'We do not wish to sell our land nor our water; let your friends stay in their own country'.<sup>352</sup> Sproat, believing there were exceptionally good reasons for acquiring the land, stressed the benefits to the people: the settlers would buy fish and whale oil, and labour to build the new township would provide economic inducements for the people. His typically colonial attitude is apparent in these words when he says:

"My great chief, the high chief of the King-George-men, seeing that you do not work your land, orders that you sell it. It is of no use to you. The trees you do not need; you will fish and hunt as you do now, and collect firewood, planks for your houses and cedar for your canoes. The white man will give you work, and buy your fish and oil."<sup>353</sup>

Sproat continues, endorsing the superiority of the Europeans, their teachings, education, and technological prowess.

"The white men will come. All your people know they are your superiors; they make the things you value. You cannot make muskets, blankets, or bread. The white men will teach your children to read printing, and to be like themselves."<sup>354</sup>

The purpose of colonialism is quickly affirmed in one short patronising statement.

Sproat was a colonial employee sent to the west-coast of Vancouver Island to disseminate the British ideal of civilisation: it was not just a question of constructing a

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<sup>348</sup> Sproat, Gilbert Malcolm *Scenes and Studies*; p.4; Sproat wrote *Scenes and Studies of Savage Life* at the end of his five year residency on Vancouver Island. His observations, thoughts, and comments of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth are detailed and thought provoking. He offers reflections on their future, and the effects and responsibilities of the colonisers; an extraordinary book of first-hand observations.

<sup>349</sup> Sproat, G.M. *Scenes and Studies*, Chapter 1: Occupation of District, p.4.

<sup>350</sup> Sproat named the people Aht, an abbreviation of an Nuu'Chah'Nulth band, Sshahts/Tseshahts.

<sup>351</sup> Sproat, G.M. *Scenes and Studies*, Chapter 1: Occupation of District, p.3.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid., Chapter 1: Occupation of District, p.4.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid., Chapter 1: Occupation of District, p.4.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid., p.4: I have used the phrase 'the white man' in this instance as this is the way Sproat refers to Europeans and other colonials.

company town, Port Alberni, and overseeing the saw-mill but of 'Europeanising' the landscape and the people. He recalls in his book, 'Scenes and Studies of Savage Life,'<sup>355</sup> he did not come to Vancouver Island to collect and record ethnographic data but to establish an English settlement saying:

"I did not intend, originally, to publish these observations [but] my private and official business ... gave me an advantageous position for studying the natives themselves, and also the effect upon them of intercourse with civilised intruders."<sup>356</sup>

The outcome from this venture is a detailed account from Sproat reflecting on the effects of settler intrusion, the impositions imposed by government officials, the effects and responsibilities of the colonisers, interactions and misunderstandings between two very different cultures, and more importantly, detailed observations of the people themselves and on their future, an extraordinary book of first-hand observations recorded in the 1860s. Unlike other visitors to the region, Sproat 'lived among the people and had a long acquaintanceship with them'; he did not 'merely pass through the country', so the information given by Sproat concerns their 'language, manners, customs, and way of life', the detail, not from his memory but from 'memoranda, written with a pencil on the spot – in the hut, in the canoe, or in the deep forest.'<sup>357</sup>

### Observations of Nuu'Chah'Nulth Women

Vividly, Sproat records his observations of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, their demeanour and modesty, remarking upon the frequency women wash themselves in fresh water especially at the end of a working day, changing their clothes, arranging their hair as they are 'careful of their hair, and have little boxes in which they keep combs and looking-glasses.'<sup>358</sup> Sproat makes numerous references to water, bathing and cleanliness, expressing unexpected surprise.

Till beyond middle age many ... bathe every day in the sea, and in the winter they rub their bodies with oil after coming out of the water. ... Mothers roll their young children in the snow to make them hardy.

I should not call the Aht Indians a dirty people in their persons: they wash often, the fresh air circulates round their bodies, and they have not the disagreeable oniony smell about them which is common among the ... poorer classes in many countries.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>355</sup> The book, *Scenes and Studies of Savage Life* was a report of his life, observations, and experiences spent as a colonial employee on Vancouver Island.

<sup>356</sup> Sproat, G.M. *Scenes and Studies, Preface*.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid., *Preface*.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid., p.26; Chapter 1V Physical Appearance.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid., p.24; Chapter 1V Physical Appearance.

Even today, the importance of water is remarked upon, the prominence of the daily ritual of bathing, cleansing before ceremonies, linking prayer and water for spiritual needs.<sup>360</sup> In an interview, Eileen emphasised: 'as a people we were a very clean people. For all our ceremonies we did a cleansing as cleansing was part of all our ceremonies.'<sup>361</sup>

Like Cook and Meares before him, Sproat mentions women's modesty, reaffirming comments made by Mozino, Cook, Walker and Jewitt over half a century earlier.

The personal modesty of the Aht women – particularly when they are young – is greater than that of the men. ... The women wear a shift, or some such thing, under their blanket, and seem anxious, generally, to cover their nakedness,<sup>362</sup> Some early visitors to the area had found the north-west Pacific inhospitable giving as their reason the 'modesty of Indian women compared to the amorous Polynesians.'<sup>363</sup> Sproat conveys a distinct and clear impression of how the women tend themselves: combing, plaiting and beading their hair so it tapers to a point; ornamenting their hair with beads so it 'hangs loosely ...kept down by leaden weights affixed to the end', and whilst at work hair is tied up so the women were not inconvenienced.<sup>364</sup> Maintaining, decorating and caring for their hair was an important element of women's lives, so cutting a person's hair as a punishment for minor offenses was effective, attracting the derision of the community. Displaying an unexpected sensitivity towards women, Sproat realises women's hair is cut as a sign of grief:

They cut the hair, as a mark of respect for the dead. ... The women display their grief openly. In their houses the women often talk about friends who have died; how they were respected; what great things they did.<sup>365</sup>

One hundred and fifty years later, while recounting the protocols of death and grieving, similar observations were expressed.

... All the women would come together and they would grieve and they would cut their hair as a sign of mourning because their hair represented a life, a lifeline, like a life-time of enjoyment with that family member; ... all of them who were related would cut their hair.<sup>366</sup>

Observations on women's attire are detailed; hats and capes are made of cedar bark or grasses, and were worn occasionally, but always on a canoe journey. Sproat noted women liked ornaments and were rarely 'seen without rings, anklets and bracelets of beads or brass.'<sup>367</sup> At feasts and gatherings, women's faces were 'painted red with vermillion or berry

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<sup>360</sup> Referenced in interviews with Eileen Haggard, Kathy Robinson and Louise; see Chapter Seven.

<sup>361</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.14 of transcript.

<sup>362</sup> Sproat, G.M. *Scenes and Studies*, p.315; appendix note 6.

<sup>363</sup> Fisher, R. *Contact and Conflict*, p.19; see also Journals of Cook, Walker and Meares .

<sup>364</sup> Sproat, G.M. *Scenes and Studies*, p.27: Chapter 1V Physical Appearance.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*, p.262 in Chapter XXV, Usages in Burial.

<sup>366</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009; p.15 of transcript.

<sup>367</sup> Sproat, G.M. *Scenes and Studies*, p.27: Chapter IV – Physical Appearance.

juice'<sup>368</sup> found in the forests although this practice was discontinued when women reached the age of twenty-five as 'for the remainder of their lives they wear feathers in their hair.'<sup>369</sup> Women were adept at bead work not only decorating their hair but also the blankets they wove and wore.

Like the evidence from the journals of Cook et al, Sproat is meticulous in his detailed observations of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, and his comparisons with Europeans reveals his dilemma of trying to balance what he knows, expects and believes with what he is actually seeing. He notices 'the condition of the Aht women is not one of unseemly inferiority; the men have their due share of the labours necessary for subsistence.'<sup>370</sup> Sproat is in a quandary: his understanding of his position on the island was clear in his mind, he was there to establish English settlements, but his impressions of the people did not match his expectations. He attempts to rationalise his thinking by paying lip service to Social Darwinism, saying to the Chief of the Tseshaht, the wave of 'progress' would be inevitable, inexorable. Despite his attempts to help and support the people, his own beliefs are too ingrained and he seems to side-track his dilemma. Sproat acts as a mouthpiece for the imperial powers when he succinctly sums up the idea of colonisation and the taking of land, reverting to a dismissive tone and language, putting the 'savages' down.

Occupation was justifiable ... Any right in the soil which these natives had as occupiers was partial and imperfect, as, with exception of hunting animals in the forests, plucking wild fruits, and cutting a few trees to make canoes and houses, the natives did not, in any civilised sense, occupy the land. It would be unreasonable to suppose ... a body of civilised men ... Could not rightly settle in a country ... peopled only by ... savages. There would be little progress in the world by means of colonisation ... that wonderful agent, which, directed by laws of its own, had changed and is changing the whole surface of the earth.<sup>371</sup>

These sentiments posed a dilemma for Nuu'Chah'Nulth people: if they subjugated themselves to the 'white man's laws and impositions' they would lose their identity, but change was necessary, as with decreasing land acreage for a hunter/gatherer lifestyle the means to survive was becoming increasingly impossible. For the Nuu'Chah'Nulth it was essential to retain strengths to balance and reinforce their beliefs and culture against the burdens of colonisation. Indigenous land was being reconstructed in European terms through acts of parliament, the end of the fur-trade, settlers and, eventually, residential schooling.<sup>372</sup> Sproat,

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<sup>368</sup> Ibid., p.27: the variety of face paintings for decoration, celebrations etc. will be discussed in greater depth in chapter 5 with reference to Edward Sapir.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid., p.28: Chapter IV – Physical Appearance.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid., p.93: Chapter XII – Condition of Women.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid., p.7: Chapter II – Right of Savages to the Soil.

<sup>372</sup> Harris, C. *Making Native Space*.



when he expresses these views, is justifying colonialism but his opinions also present a dilemma for himself. He is in a quandary; there is a dichotomy in his thinking. The language Sproat uses is highly rhetorical as he is seeing colonialism as relentless, unstoppable. Sproat is a product of his time, conditioned to think this way and as colonialism de-humanises people it is a no-win situation. He appears to be interpreting all that he sees and hears through his own cultural lens instead of trying to understand and see things from the perspective of the culture he is involved with, the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, a good example of ethnocentrism. In the chapter, 'Effects upon Savages of Intercourse with Civilised Men', Sproat expounds on the 'Real Meaning of Colonization as regards Aborigines.'

"There is, in my mind, little doubt that colonization on a large scale, by English colonists, practically means the displacing and extinction of the savage population."<sup>373</sup>

Despite the favourable comments of the people he has observed, Sproat cannot remove himself from his British, colonial upbringing.

### **The Arrival of Settlers and the Beginnings of Colonialism**

The relative inaccessibility of the west-coast meant colonial influences occurred at a later date than other Aboriginal communities in Canada but were to be no less harrowing. Aboriginal land was being reshaped in European terms and, at the same time, European ways were being imposed, heavily influenced by the Indian Act<sup>374</sup> and colonial thinking.<sup>375</sup> Colonisers reinforced their own culture by endeavouring to make the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, the colonised, conform to their expectations: cultural, educational, economic and political systems were imposed upon Nuu'Chah'Nulth society removing from them the right to speak for themselves, for their voices to remain hidden. The first intrusion into Nuu'Chah'Nulth society was the arrival of settlers with firmly held views concerning the inferiority of First Nation people: settlement meant displacement not assimilation, the unsettled and unused First Nations land was there for the taking. Before Europeans arrived each person had a

role and responsibility within the community and, like a fine greased wheel ... and all of those roles were ... acknowledged and brought forward and in order for that canoe to move forward ... you needed all the paddles to be ... balanced, all to be strong ... so each person from a very tiny child to elders had roles.<sup>376</sup>

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<sup>373</sup> Sproat, G.M. *Scenes and Studies*, p.272-273: Chapter XXVII – Effects Upon Savages of Intercourse with Civilized Men; further discussion can be found in Edward Said 'Orientalism'.

<sup>374</sup> Indian Act, 1876: The act combined many smaller acts addressing 'Indian' issues that had been passed during the previous twenty years; the previous acts had proved to be too cumbersome to administer.

<sup>375</sup> Harris, C. *Making Native Space*; Fisher, R. *Contact and Conflict*.

<sup>376</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009, p.5: the analogy of the canoe is used rather than a wheel but the meaning is the same and in this instance a better analogy as moving forward is stressed despite all the hazards being imposed through colonisation.

The seminal writer, Paula Gunn Allen,<sup>377</sup> contends that during this initial period of contact successful colonisation depended on the conquest and subjugation of First Nation women, the necessity of diminishing their strengths within the communities. She uses the image of 'Throwing down medicine bundles' as a metaphor for women abdicating their prior claim to spiritual, political, social and economic power within Aboriginal societies, and assuming a subordinate role within a dominant patriarchal culture. Allen believes the colonisers

created chaos in all the old systems which were ... superbly healthy, simultaneously co-operative and autonomous [as] success of their systems depended on complementary institutions and organised relationships among all sectors of their world.<sup>378</sup>

The same sentiments are reflected amongst First Nation women and maybe it is necessary to ask the question: 'Can First Nation women have bundles to throw?' In order for communities and families to survive, it is important to understand within yourself the parts that give you the strength to continue, the skills to adapt to the new ways, to use what is relevant and discard, for the moment, those things that are unnecessary. This process is easily explained through Eileen's words.

People from another world came with such different ways, different ways of doing and very different thoughts of how life is. [They] have come from a place where you have absolutely no idea or concept of what it is and also they have such a strong influence and there are changes in diet, and behaviour ... and diseases ... for all of that was colonisation.<sup>379</sup>

First Nation women have been viewed through the distorted lens of sexism and racism, perceived as drudges, slaves or prostitutes.<sup>380</sup> Although some traders were more open-minded, recognising the value of Aboriginal women in isolated areas, their knowledge and skill of living from the land, utilising everything the land offered: 'the women did skinning too; whatever they could do they helped ... and [the children] would scrape the fat off the skins.'<sup>381</sup> Preparing pelts was women's work so as demand for pelts increased so did the women's skill in preparing animal skins for traders.

Early European observers, ignorant of the customs of gift exchanging and unable to speak local languages, often mistook gifts as a dowry or payment when in fact the sharing of

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<sup>377</sup> Allen, P.G. (1986) *The Sacred Hoop*; 'When Women Throw Down Bundles: Strong Women Make Strong Nations', a chapter in her section 'The Ways of our Grandmother' from her book' pp30 – 42.

<sup>378</sup> Allen, P.G. *The Sacred Hoop*, p.31; her reference is to Native American women rather than First Nations women but the sentiments match.

<sup>379</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009, p.5 of transcript.

<sup>380</sup> Justice, D.H. (2006) *Our Fire Survives the Storm: A Cherokee Literary History*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis; Fisher, R. *Contact and Conflict*.

<sup>381</sup> Kathy Robinson's interview took place at her house on the Reserve, May 2009: p.6 of transcript; Fisher, R. *Contact and Conflict*.

gifts was, and still is, a natural part of Nuu'Chah'Nulth culture.<sup>382</sup> Men assumed similarities to European culture, Aboriginal women to be the property of men that colonialism and patriarchy seemed to go hand in glove. These attitudes and perceptions continue with First Nation women being portrayed in a jaundiced light and, although writing about Aboriginal women is now more positive and accurate, there is still a lack of understanding of their role in society. Powers, in 1986, said:

[There] has been a long history of treating Native American women roguishly. In both scholarly and popular writing there have been trends and popular themes ranging from noble sauvagesse to the scornful squaw ... Studies of Native American women have been selective, stereotypic and damaging.<sup>383</sup>

These impressions still linger in people's minds, and in both popular and academic literature. The sentiments are reinforced in O'Meara's distorted perspective of Aboriginal women in the fur-trade. According to O'Meara, the major force behind westward expansion was a search for:

...strange exotic creatures, 'the tawny belles of Canada' who could be seduced with a few 'baubles and gewgaws'; [concluding with the sentiment] thus imperialism is blamed on the 'dusky maidens' who lured men west.<sup>384</sup>

O'Meara's work, besides being highly contentious, is suspect as the introduction to his book has a pornographic emphasis rather than an objective and scientific one.

We shall observe the Indian woman as the victim of raw lust and brutal force. We shall view her as a slave, concubine, prostitute, a 'hospitality gift' or simply a loan for the night to a passing stranger.<sup>385</sup>

His use of the word 'we' is offensive as it implicates the reader in such demeaning portrayals of women. Evidently O'Meara found First Nation women to be attractive but regrettably he misrepresents his own personal fantasies as academic discourse, and he appears not to own up to the other agendas that drive colonialism – the greed for land.

The effects of implanting the attitudes of a dominant culture and society onto First Nations and the scale of colonial settlement generated by the expansion of British society was diverse and far reaching, coinciding with the development of the modern capitalist society.<sup>386</sup> The perception colonies were established to provide the raw materials necessary for

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<sup>382</sup> Jamieson, K. (1978) *Indian Women and the law in Canada: Citizens, Minus*, Ministry of Supply & Services, Ottawa, Canada; Coontz, Stephanie (1988) 'The Native American Tradition' in *The Social Origins of Private Life: A History of American Families*, New York Verso: pp41-72.

<sup>383</sup> Powers, Paula (1986) *Oglala Women: Myth, Ritual and Reality* University of Chicago Press, Chicago: pp7-8.

<sup>384</sup> O'Meara, W. (1968) *Daughters of the Country: The Women of the Fur Trades and Mountain Men*, Harcourt Brace & World Inc., New York; reference is made to this work in Brodribb, S. (1984) 'The Traditional Roles of Native Women of Canada and the Impact of Colonisation' in *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* IV, 1: 85-103, quote Brodribb p.93.

<sup>385</sup> O'Meara, W. *Daughters of the Country*, p.23.

<sup>386</sup> Said, E. (1993) *Culture and Imperialism*, Chatto & Windus, London: p.8.

burgeoning economies was consolidated, and relationships between the colonised and the coloniser distorted from the outset, particularly in terms of Aboriginal languages, culture, economy and land. The ideology and prejudices of race and racism were interwoven into this mixture, with a justification for land and natural resources. Colonised people were considered inferior in every sense of the word. Historically, a further dimension can be added, as European patriarchal practice did not equate with First Nations mores' society of respect, balance and interconnectedness, with everyone, whatever their strengths and skills, having a role to play for the greater good of the whole community, an egalitarian society. In European terms, colonisation was seen as a necessary civilising task involving education and paternalistic nurturing with no account taken of Aboriginal worldviews.

After Darwin developed his theories of evolution in the mid nineteenth century, Herbert Spencer expanded the idea with the concept of 'survival of the fittest in the evolution of mankind', a notion fitting perfectly with the colonists' belief in their superior power, control of people, and resources.<sup>387</sup> It justified their right to make decisions for others who were considered to be inferior – Aboriginal people and women among others. It was about this time John Austin, a British legal philosopher, developed the doctrine of 'parliamentary supremacy' that allows parliament the power to pass laws leaving courts with no authority to overrule, a system used in Canada until 1982 when its own constitution was established.<sup>388</sup> The idea of the evolution of mankind and the survival of the fittest, a crude application of Social Darwinism, went hand in hand with the doctrines of nineteenth century imperialism. By the latter half of the nineteenth century, colonisation had developed into a system of historical classification in which First Nations society was perceived as intrinsically inferior. The system recognised the notional idea of improvement for the colonised, through education, acculturation and assimilation, which would, in theory, allow the colonised to be raised to the status of coloniser at some later date. However, to gain citizenship meant the destruction of Aboriginal culture and the loss of Indian status.

The mid-nineteenth century saw the hardening of racial attitudes in Britain, the birthplace of many settlers: the heady days following the abolition of slavery and the Select Committee on Aborigines in the 1830s had passed,<sup>389</sup> the humanitarian movements lost earlier

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<sup>387</sup> Robert Yazzie 'Indigenous Peoples and Postcolonial Colonialism' in Battiste, M. (Ed.)(2000) *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver: pp39-49.

<sup>388</sup> *Parliamentary supremacy* is a triangular system of power in which the people at the top assume they have the authority, the right to control the people at the bottom, Aboriginal people; they have the right to make decisions for them, that these decisions are acceptable and correct; the Indian Act.

<sup>389</sup> Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes (British Settlements) 1837, reprinted, with comment, by the "Aborigines Protection Society", Rhodes House, London in 1837: The report was written to consider what measures ought to be adopted with regard to the native

influence and direction. The British were shocked by events – the Indian Mutiny in 1857, the wars in South Africa in the 1850s, the Maori-European land wars, 1845 to 1872, and rebellion in Jamaica in the 1860s – conflicts corroborating negative views of Aboriginal people. The late 1850s saw opinions on British supremacy and Aboriginal inferiority solidified from a generally held hypothesis into a ‘proven doctrine [that] race was the principle determinant of culture.’<sup>390</sup> Settlers came to Vancouver Island with pre-conceptions and firmly held views about the inferiority of First Nations, and very few altered their views on the basis of experience. Settlement meant displacement, not assimilation, and the demise of Aboriginal culture and traditions as people’s way of life was in direct conflict with European ideals. The disappearance of local populations was inevitable as there was little of value to be preserved. With the passing of the fur-trade, the image of the people inevitably weakened.<sup>391</sup>

Following Douglas’ retirement in April 1864, most of his land policies were abandoned, the Colonial Office stood aside, and the formation of Native Land Policy passed quickly into the hands of local officials who broadly represented the aspirations and values of settler society. Douglas’ views had evolved from his dealings with fur-traders, out of liberal humanitarianism in the early decades of the nineteenth century. With his restraining presence removed and the moderating influence of the Colonial Office gone, another set of values, settler values, filled the vacuum. Joseph William Trutch was appointed chief commissioner of land and works for British Columbia in 1864, a man who epitomised settler mentality.<sup>392</sup> Trutch could be considered the mouthpiece of settler opinion. He believed in progress and development, and viewed land as ‘awaiting investment and settlers; he was the archetypal colonist.’<sup>393</sup> In 1864, when Trutch became chief commissioner of lands and works, assuming control of Indian policy in British Columbia, he refused to recognise First Nation titles to their lands or negotiate treaties; the Nuw’Chah’Nulth, unlike many other First Nations, did not sign treaties.<sup>394</sup>

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inhabitants where British settlements are made in order to secure them, to assist in protecting the defenceless, and promoting the advancement of uncivilised tribes.

<sup>390</sup> Fisher, Robin *Contact and Conflict*, p.87; see Harris, Cole *Making Native Space*; and Monture, P. & McGuire, P. (Eds.)(2009) *First Voices: an Aboriginal Women’s Reader*, INANNA Publications and Education Inc., Toronto; Darwin’s ‘Origin of the Species’ was published at this time in 1859.

<sup>391</sup> ‘The image of the disappearing Indian’ discussed in Chapter 5.

<sup>392</sup> Joseph William Trutch (1826-1904) was to have more influence on Indian land policy than any other individual. He was recommended by Douglas because of his competence as a surveyor and engineer not for his ability to deal with Indian affairs. The foundation or bedrock of settler mentality had been laid down earlier.

<sup>393</sup> Fisher R. *Contact and Conflict*, p.162; see also Harris, C. *Making Native Space*, p.46.

<sup>394</sup> Harris, C. *Making Native Space*; Fisher, R. *Contact and Conflict*, p.160-161; Dickason, O. (2002) *Canada’s First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times*, Oxford University Press, Ca.

## The Acts

From the 1830s, a series of legal reports and acts had been written providing the foundation for the 1876 Indian Act. Following the rebellion of 1837 against the British colonial government, Lord Durham was sent to Canada to scrutinise the situation. Returning to England after only five months, John George Lambton, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Durham, wrote and presented to parliament the 'Report on the Affairs of British North America (1839)'<sup>395</sup> which became the blueprint for colonial policies advocating settlement of the new colonies by immigrants rather than convicts. Aboriginal people were not considered in the report as settlers believed the land was theirs for the taking. The passing of the 'Gradual Civilization Act 1857', an act not repealed until 1895, permanently disenfranchised all Aboriginal people by placing them into a separate inferior legal category from the citizens of Upper Canada.<sup>396</sup> It was a church inspired piece of legislation built upon the 'Act for the Protection of the Indians in Upper Canada, 1839', an act that ensured women lost their Indian status on marriage, the first act to introduce the concepts of civilisation and assimilation, viewed by many as a way of dealing with the 'Indian' problem. From 1830, the goal of the Indian Departments was the creation of civilised, Christianised and self-governing communities seated securely on Reserves protected by the British imperial government. With the Gradual Civilization Act, a new path was charted, cemented in the Gradual Enfranchisement Act, 1869, reinforced by the Indian Act, 1876,<sup>397</sup> and sanctioned by successive Canadian parliaments. Confederation gave the new federal government responsibility for and control over most Aboriginal people and their lands so fulfilling its objective: to produce a political entity from coast to coast. However, it proved to be an impossible goal to attain as imposing uniformity on diverse regions, peoples, cultures and languages across a wide expanse of land is an impossible task. Each region has its own unique historical development, different religious denominations and distinct nationalities. Regions can be joined politically, they cannot be culturally homogenised. Although the

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<sup>395</sup> Lambton worked closely alongside Wakefield, a very capable negotiator and ardent believer in colonialism.

<sup>396</sup> Gradual Civilization Act 1857: *an Act to Encourage the Gradual Civilization of Indian Tribes in the Province of Canada, and to Amend the Laws relating to Indians* passed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of the 5<sup>th</sup> parliament of the province of Canada; the act introduced the concept of enfranchisement to Aboriginal men over 21 able to speak, read & write either in English or French, free from debt and of good moral character, surrendering Indian status to become British. With enfranchisement came the opportunity to adopt Christian names.

<sup>397</sup> By 1876 there were so many Aboriginal related laws covering the people and their land that the government assumed the right to define the identity of the people by consolidating these acts into the *Indian Act of Canada* in an attempt to ensure order between the people and the settlers, a law designed to integrate Aboriginal people into mainstream Canadian economy and culture. In effect it was a law that made the people legal wards of state and by virtue of the wording they became imprisoned on their Reserve land.

<http://www.angelfire.com/realm/shades/nativeamericans/indianactcanada.htm>

underlying intention was to assimilate regional diversities, there are too many varied groups of people so Confederation produced a union of peoples but not unity.

For the next one hundred years, from Davin's Report of 1879<sup>398</sup> to Trudeau's White Paper of the 1960s,<sup>399</sup> the Canadian government sought to assimilate First Nations into white Canadian society.<sup>400</sup> Underpinning the whole process was the arbitrary and paternalistic 1876 Indian Act, an act vital to the protection of land rights for white Canadians, the controversial assimilation of the Aboriginal people through residential schooling, and the creation of classifications concerning the status and isolation of Aboriginal people.

The Indian Act defined Indian status and prescribed what 'Indianness' meant.<sup>401</sup> The ramifications were more severe for women and still continue to impact negatively upon them. Before 1869 the definition of Indian was fairly broad referring to 'all persons of Indian blood, the spouses and their descendants.'<sup>402</sup> The passing of the act changed this definition. As assimilation was the central element, from a government perspective Indian women who married non-Indians were considered to have been assimilated and therefore did not need Indian status. In contrast, if an Indian man married a non-Indian woman he not only retained his Indian status but the non-Indian woman gained status under the terms of the act as would their children. The imposition of this Euro-centric ideology on Aboriginal families was a direct disruption and contradiction of traditional values and family life. Aboriginal women, by marrying out were stripped of their rights and privileges as Indians. This state of affairs continued until 1985 with the passing of Bill C-31, when the act was amended to allow First Nation women the right to keep or regain their status even after 'marrying out', and to grant

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<sup>398</sup> Nicholas Flood Davin, nineteenth century Canadian writer, journalist and politician; commissioned by the PM John A. Macdonald to write what became known as the Davin Report: the formal title 'Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds', submitted Ottawa, March 14<sup>th</sup> 1879; the report led to the establishment of the residential school system in Canada:

[http://www.uoguelph.ca/shakespeare/multimedia/pdf/davin\\_report.pdf](http://www.uoguelph.ca/shakespeare/multimedia/pdf/davin_report.pdf).

<sup>399</sup> 1969 White Paper Canadian policy document in which then minister of Indian Affairs, Jean Chretien, proposed the abolition of the Indian Act, the rejection of land claims and the assimilation of First Nations people with the Canadian population with the status of other ethnic minorities rather than a distinct group. The response, The Red Paper: Harold Cardinal and the Indian Chiefs of Alberta explained their opposition to the paper from status Indians: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1969\\_White\\_Paper](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1969_White_Paper) and <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ai/arp/ls/pubs/cp1969/cp1969-eng.asp>.

<sup>400</sup> Ischke, U. & McNab, D. (Eds.)(2005) *Walking the Tightrope*; Cox, B. A. (Ed.)(2002) *Native People Native Lands: Canadian Indians, Inuit and Métis*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Canada

<sup>401</sup> Indian Act 1876: until 1876 cultural distinctions and diversity amongst Aboriginal people had never been categorised, however the act controlled identity by creating classifications that have become normalised as cultural difference; the main goal was assimilation of Aboriginal people into white Canadian society by providing the guidelines for behaviour, specific conditions and standards to meet the values and beliefs of white Canadians.

<sup>402</sup> Voyageur, C. 'Contemporary Aboriginal Women in Canada' in Long, D. & Dickason, O. (Eds.)(2000) *Visions of the Heart: Canadian Aboriginal Issues*, Harcourt, Toronto: pp93-115.

status to the children (although not grandchildren) of such a marriage.<sup>403</sup> Even today Nuu'Chah'Nulth women continue to fight for Indian status for their grandchildren.<sup>404</sup>

## Residential Schooling

It was believed the social problems of Aboriginal people – poverty, crime, alcoholism, the three elements encouraged through colonialism – would be reduced through assimilation, a fair and sensible policy. The most controversial aspect of assimilation was education. Following the recommendations of Davin's Report in 1879,<sup>405</sup> the government sought to assimilate children by removing them, in some instances forcibly, from their families: it was the law. Davin took on board the practices he had seen whilst travelling in America, recommending 'all reasonable aid in their preparation for citizenship by educating them in industry and in the arts of civilization',<sup>406</sup> by lessening the effects of family and community. His advice: the problems could only be solved 'by educating the Indian, and mixed-bloods, in self-reliance and industry.'<sup>407</sup> Davin believed the adult Indian could be taught nothing except a 'little farming and stock-raising and to dress in a more civilised manner' that children would learn little at school if they returned home every evening. Davin also believed 'if anything is to be done with the Indian catch him young,'<sup>408</sup> so it was necessary to remove the child from their home surroundings. A simple comment from Kathy summarises what happened in so many isolated communities:

They came and picked us up for residential school and then we ... lost track of everything. We were five years old then ... they picked everyone up. We stayed for a long time.<sup>409</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> From 1876 to 1951 married women living on the Reserve were denied the right to vote in band elections, to hold elected office or to participate in public meetings, in contrast to Indian men who were entitled to be involved in all these activities: Voyageur *ibid*, ramifications discussed in Chapter 6.

<sup>404</sup> Discussions in Nanaimo, Vancouver Island, May 2012. The Bill has created enormous problems for the women's children and grandchildren. Its intent is that in a few generations there will be no legally recognised 'Indians' left in Canada: The last chapter in Tom King's book, *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative*, "What is it about us You Don't Like?" discusses how this law works; <http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/massey-archives/2003/11/07/massey-lectures-2003-the-truth-about-stories-a-native-narrative/>.

<sup>405</sup> The Report of Industrial Schools for Indians and Halfbreeds, Ottawa, 14<sup>th</sup> March 1879 which underpins the whole of the publicly funded Canadian residential school system: Nicholas Flood Davin, commissioned by Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald to research and write his report, travelled to America to view their industrial school practices: known as the Davin Report 1879.

<sup>406</sup> Davin Report, p.2.

<sup>407</sup> Milloy, John (2000) *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System 1879 to 1986* University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg, Ca.; p.32.

<sup>408</sup> Davin Report, p.2 & p.12.

<sup>409</sup> Interview with Kathy Robinson, May 2009; p.4 of transcript; Kathy is an Elder, in her 80s; she was in residential school around the 1930s but the system of separating families, the children from their parents, continued throughout the twentieth century.



Through segregated learning, farming practices, cattle raising and agricultural trades for boys and suitable skills for girls to become a farmer's wife, sewing and bread-making, the young Indian would be taught to live by European standards, to understand European values and work practices, to be self-reliant.<sup>410</sup> However, Davin did recommend it was necessary for both girls and boys to be educated as it was the goal, after all, to integrate not only civilised young men into a non-Aboriginal labour force but also young women should be educated to be civilising wives and mothers.<sup>411</sup>

The prevailing belief at the time was a combination of Reserve living and the education of children, both necessary if Aboriginal people were to assume a place in Canadian society; and education for work would prepare children for citizenship and assimilation, a process known as aggressive civilisation. Severing family connections by separating children from their families and, once in school, separating the boys from the girls, was the way to accomplish assimilation.<sup>412</sup> The government and the church established residential schools in the belief Aboriginal people would be unable to adapt to a rapidly modernising Canadian society without intervention. The whole process was to be underpinned by the following considerations: the child was easier to mould than an adult, education had to be done outside the family and the influence of the home, so 'children had to be removed from their families,' to be kept within a circle of civilised conditions.<sup>413</sup> Thus residential schools, where children lived for most of the year, far from their traditional lives and family influence, were the answer. Residential schools became the tool for social control.

It was a residential place [children] went home during the holidays. Some children weren't quite as fortunate and had to stay during the holidays as well ... If they lived up north and their parents couldn't come ... Or have the money to send them home ... I can't imagine what that was like.<sup>414</sup>

The analogy of the circle, the school, encompassed the whole life of the child within an environment of re-socialisation, or re-schooling; one culture was to be replaced by another entirely different culture through work, a surrogate mother, and the teacher, and the process was to retrain the child to enable them to take their place in the wider world, a circle of

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<sup>410</sup> Davin Report, pp6, 8-9.

<sup>411</sup> Milloy, J. *A National Crime*, pp40-41.

<sup>412</sup> The primary goal of aggressive civilisation was to kill Indian spirit and replace it with white thinking; kindle a work ethic and, after a child turned 16, arrange a marriage, return the couple to their Reserve or farm to continue the process of becoming white.

<sup>413</sup> Milloy, J. *A National Crime*, p.32-33; *to be kept constantly within the circle of civilized conditions* is considered to be a recommendation by Davin.

<sup>414</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.2; Eileen's mother and grandfather attended the same residential school, three generations spanning the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Anne Robinson also talked about families with 3 generations attending residential school.

civilization.<sup>415</sup> The Department of Indian Affairs believed 'the Indian problem existed owing to the fact the Indian is untrained to take his place in the world.'<sup>416</sup> However, schools needed to teach both skills and values as the competences people acquired would be worthless unless accompanied by the values of a civilised society in which the child was destined to live. It was advised a child needed to be taught 'honesty, truth, the beauty of a good pure life,'<sup>417</sup> values already encapsulated within Nuu'Chah'Nulth culture but which would now be changed to reflect European values. The curriculum was based on a European format with the primary goal of resetting the child's Aboriginal seasonal clock to one dependent on settler mentality. Believing children inherited a disregard of time, children would be constantly employed with well-structured routines of work and usefulness they would never learn at home, completely misunderstanding the seasonal migrations, work patterns and culture of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth. It was essential children learned the Canadian way of life, prompt obedience to discipline, in other words, well-regulated lives moving the children towards the ultimate goal of assimilating civilised European values and citizenship. The transference of the wisdom, knowledge and skills of their elders would no longer be acceptable.

For over one hundred years, thousands of Aboriginal children passed through the Canadian residential school system. Begun in the 1870s, it was intended, in the words of government officials, to bring Aboriginal children into the 'circle of civilisation.'<sup>418</sup> Until the 1950s, parents had to send their children to a residential school as all Aboriginal people, children and adults, were considered wards of the state. The DIA<sup>419</sup> employed Indian agents to ensure children attended school who 'were forcibly removed from their homes and ... put in the residential schools ... parents had no authority over what was happening. ... part of the threat to a lot of parents was ... the law would be involved if they didn't allow their children to go.'<sup>420</sup> 'They put the fear into them that if they didn't send their children to residential school the police would come and put them in jail.'<sup>421</sup>

It was an untenable situation for the Nuu'Chah'Nulth as parents wanted their children educated. They believed education was necessary for the future of all Aboriginal people, to be

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<sup>415</sup> Milloy, J. *A National Crime*, p.34; see also Chapter 'The Sacred Hoop: A Contemporary Perspective' in Allen, Paula Gunn (1986) *The Sacred Hoop: Recounting the Feminine in American Indian traditions* Beacon Press, Boston: pp54-75.

<sup>416</sup> Milloy, J. *A National Crime*, p.34.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid., p.35.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid., pp32-33.

<sup>419</sup> Department of Indian Affairs.

<sup>420</sup> Interview with Ina and Charlotte, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.10; Ina went to residential school but her younger sister Charlotte did not; their parents decided not to send her but to enrol her in the public school in Port Alberni.

<sup>421</sup> Interview with Delores Bayne, 29<sup>th</sup> April 2010: p.10 of transcript; she is 70 years old.

able to live in a white world, to have the skills needed to survive the changes happening within their lives, to be able to read, write and communicate in English, although the women believed the methods used in enforcing this education system was wrong. The Nuu'Chah'Nulth is a traditional oral society.

They always encouraged literature. My grandparents always said it was important to read even though that wasn't part of Nuu'Chah'Nulth culture which is very oral. It was said: if you were able to read you could do anything; you could be a cook, you could read a menu.<sup>422</sup>

For Nuu'Chah'Nulth people, being as optimistic as they could about adverse situations helped deal with the harsh reality of residential schooling. In their minds it ensured something positive would emerge. The determination to learn to read, write and speak English was paramount, essential for survival. Children were forbidden to speak their language in school, and were beaten if caught speaking to each other. It was partly the assimilation process, but those in charge also believed their control was weakened if they could not understand the children. Some did learn Nuu'Chah'Nulth as a way of eavesdropping on children's conversations. However, children found ways and means to communicate with each other. In one school there was a room where children were confined when caught speaking Nuu'Chah'Nulth, a basement room where it was possible to talk secretly with one another, keeping their language alive, as well as hiding their language from administrators and teachers.<sup>423</sup> This part of the assimilation process has not been successful. Although there are very few Nuu'Chah'Nulth speakers, there are enough who are able to teach their language to younger generations. To illustrate the point, one Nuu'Chah'Nulth woman had asked her father: "Why didn't you teach me the language?" He answered:

"I never wanted you to go through what we had to go through. People were beaten they had bars of soap that were turned around in their mouths so they could barely breathe anymore, to stop them speaking our language. I never wanted you to have to go through that." My older siblings were fluent and I was the last of 12; I have the basic, I'm not anywhere near even semi-fluent.<sup>424</sup>

The residential school curriculum included basic classroom studies and learning a trade, a system lasting until the 1950s.<sup>425</sup> This process made schools easier to manage as the labour

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<sup>422</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009: p.2 of transcript; Jackie spoke about her grandparents belief in the importance of education, to know how to read and write; they had both attended residential school in the early part of the twentieth century.

<sup>423</sup> Jackie Watts, p.3 of transcript; evidenced in other interviews. Other forms of abuse included putting soap into a child's mouth.

<sup>424</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.6 of transcript; her father attended Port Alberni Residential School in the 1920s.

<sup>425</sup> Boys learned blacksmithing, carpentry, car mechanics; the girls learned sewing, cooking and other domestic skills.

needed to run the schools was provided by the children themselves. Davin had suggested schools should be placed near fertile land so farming practices could be taught, replicating the successful schooling practices set up by Methodist and Roman Catholic missionaries, as this would civilise the Indians.<sup>426</sup> This proved to be impracticable on the inhospitable terrain of Vancouver Island. At Alberni Residential School, it was reported the training the children received related solely to agriculture which was 'practically useless to them as West Coast Indians do not follow farming and efforts to induce them to do so met with little success.'<sup>427</sup> The report called for training in skills allowing children to secure employment in canneries and on commercial fishing vessels when they graduated, quietly ignoring the fact these children had grown up in an environment where the mainstay of their culture was fishing: the children already possessed these skills. The recommendations made by Davin became the bedrock of the Canadian schooling system, decimating Aboriginal families, their culture and language. The last residential school finally closed in 1996 but repercussions from the effects of these schools were already apparent and still continue to affect people's lives.<sup>428</sup>

The turn of the century was an unsettled time for the Nuu'Chah'Nulth. Communities and villages were decimated due to disease, local skirmishes between bands, the establishment of residential schooling, movement of people from isolated communities into towns, diminishing hunter/gatherer lifestyles due to Reserve living, and the need for employment as traditional economies from fishing were decimated: Nuu'Chah'Nulth self-sufficiency was being shattered, signifying the onset of the 'disappearing Indian'. Due to his close observation of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, the interactions between 'civilized and uncivilized races,' Sproat had already foreseen the decline of population numbers. For him, there was little doubt as 'colonization on a large scale, by English colonists, practically means the displacing and extinction of the savage native population.'<sup>429</sup> Sproat continues by discussing the 'theory of inevitable extinction,'<sup>430</sup> believing that once this process was recognised, it would be understood the English settlers would be stimulated towards 'acts of justice and humanity.'<sup>431</sup>

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<sup>426</sup> Davin Report, p.13.

<sup>427</sup> Milloy, John A *National Crime*: p.164; N.A.C.RG 10, Vol. 8453, File985/23-5, MR C 13802, Agent's Report, Alberni School, 1926.

<sup>428</sup> By 1931, the peak of the residential school system, there were 80 schools operating in Canada; from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until the final school closed in 1996 there were 130 residential schools in existence funded by the department of Indian Affairs; and about 150,000 Aboriginal children attended these schools; more about the effects of residential schooling in Chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>429</sup> Sproat, G.M. *Scenes and Studies* Chapter XXVII: *Effects Upon Savages of Intercourse with Civilized Men: Intercourse of Races*, p.273.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid., p.274: *Intercourse with Civilized men*.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid., p.274: *Intercourse with Civilized men*.

Sproat had heard from various sources the ‘natives were decaying, and had been decaying, in their isolated state’<sup>432</sup> before any ‘civilized men had visited the country’, although he admits the condition of the Nuw’Chah’Nulth had improved with the founding of the English settlement of Port Alberni, confirming ‘their houses, food, and clothing were better than they had formerly been.’<sup>433</sup> This state of improvement does not last as Sproat, concerned about their decreasing numbers, begins to realise the close proximity of English civilisation was having a detrimental effect on the local people: there was more ill-health amongst those living closest to Port Alberni, more instances of small-pox, an increased mortality rate, and tribal practices and ceremonies were being ignored. Sproat cites the reasons for the decline:

The effect of a change of food, and the despondency and discouragement produced in the minds of the Indians by the presence of a superior race: the latter being [the principal cause]. Nobody molested them; they had ample sustenance and shelter for the support of life, yet the people decayed. [He qualifies this statement:]

The steady brightness of civilized life seemed to dim and extinguish the flickering light of savageism, as the rays of the sun put out a common fire.<sup>434</sup>

Sproat believes his comments modified the opinions of scholars and settlers who attributed the decline and extinction of Aboriginal people to ‘the injustice and cruelty of the intruders, and, to the diseases and vices which they carry with them.’<sup>435</sup> However, in his final chapter, Sproat asks:

“Can nothing be done to prevent or counterbalance the injury to the aboriginal races consequent upon the occupation of their country by English emigrants?” [And answers]” I am afraid that little indeed can be done by governments, societies, or individuals, to preserve savages from their seemingly appointed decay, or to improve those tribes which have been most in contact with settlers. It may, however, be possible to benefit isolated bodies of savages by civilized teaching and example, though the improvement may not extend to the prolongation of their national existence. Alas! That travellers and missionaries have contributed so little solid information towards the solving of this problem.”<sup>436</sup>

A negative view of Nuw’Chah’Nulth people is contemplated by Sproat so it is essential to identify positive aspects of colonisation, to consider what items the settlers introduced that

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<sup>432</sup> Ibid., p.275: *Decay of Aborigines*; the sources referred to by Sproat are Cook, Meares and isolated remarks from fur traders.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid., p.276: *The Writer’s Experience*: following the settlement of the English, the people lived as well as could be expected; Sproat affirms the demise of the Indian.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid., p.279: *Causes of Decay*.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid., p.279-280: *Causes of Decay*: Sproat continues to discuss the three points concluding that despite disease, vice and cruelty it is, in fact, the character of the people themselves that has brought them to this state – the ‘disappearing Indian’ and not the close contact with Europeans who were not cruel, did not introduce disease, and as drinking is not a vice it is the excessive use and abuse of drink that is the vice.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid., p.287; Chapter XXVIII, Concluding chapter.

not everything was unhealthy, unworkable and inhumane. The Nuu'Chah'Nulth had plenty of food. They were mostly self-sufficient and had taught:

Voyageurs or whoever came how to use the foods and to live off the land ... to prevent scurvy. There was plenty of food, not just the meats and the fish but wild onions, there were berries, and there were roots ... It was when the settlers came that they brought flour and so they started making bread ... they never had bread and they never had sugar or milk ... they brought material because prior to contact they used cedar, cedar for everything. ... Potatoes came with the settlers.<sup>437</sup>

The settlers introduced foods that not only supplemented diet, a necessity when hunting was reduced to such small parcels of reserve land making the hunter/gatherer way of life untenable, but also new varieties:

I think they brought in animals, certainly cows; we didn't have chickens as we didn't have eggs. We had eggs but not from chickens, sea-gull eggs. We had powdered eggs. ... I certainly remember eating oats, Quaker Oats and that would have definitely come from the settlers; whatever cereal we had, came from the store and evaporated milk ... and sugar. What we didn't have was lots of processed foods or sugar.<sup>438</sup>

However, there came a time when people began to rely upon the government relief boats in order to survive the winters rather than continuing with their traditional skills of preserving fish and berries.

In the winter we would have fruits canned and jams and all kinds of things; we had to be ready for winter. I don't think we ever did without. They always made sure there was enough of everything; it wasn't just for the moment, it was for months and months. It was at a period when a lot of people were relying very much on the government relief boats that came loaded with canned food stuff; people came to rely on them to survive throughout the winter. But our family didn't. Our mum had all the canned food we needed. I remember because we wanted to taste some of the stuff other people were getting off the boat, but we couldn't have it. I remember my mum traded some of our stuff.

I think people may have come to this point where they thought that as it was coming free why go the bother through the summer of preserving because they knew the food was going to come and it did, over and over so, the people came to rely on the boats.<sup>439</sup>

Changing attitudes prevailed, eating away at traditional thinking and knowledge. Changes to diet transformed women's lives crucially resulting in the need to earn a waged-income to pay for these goods, and to pay rent.<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: pp17-19 of transcript.

<sup>438</sup> Interview with Evelyn Corfield, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2009: pp13 of transcript; First Nation women who came from other areas also brought with them different foods and ideas.

<sup>439</sup> Interview with Ina and Charlotte, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: pp5-6 of transcript.

<sup>440</sup> Discussed further in Chapter Five.

Women were an integral part of the economic framework in Nuu'Chah'Nulth society, concerned with and involved in the fishing industry, the staple of their lives. There were distinct fishing locations: the outer rugged coastline provided access to offshore resources of whales, sea-lions, seals, salmon, and halibut; and the inner protected inlets providing sheltered winter village sites, clams from the beach, and rich salmon harvests in nearby rivers. The occupation and use of these two distinct habitats led to a balanced exploitation of available food resources along the west coast.<sup>441</sup> Fish processing plants, sealing and fishing stations, canneries, and trading posts were numerous, the protected group of islands particularly around Barkley Sound, providing excellent locations for fishing camps with numerous racks for drying the winter/spring salmon caught in the area. Cod, salmon, herring, and other sea mammals were processed at the fishing stations by the women.

There were many sites on these protected islands for acquiring food: shellfish from the beaches, berries and small mammals from the forests. Some of the Tseshaht lived on Dodd Island, a prime beach area for digging and collecting clams, an essential activity considered to be women's work, ably helped by their children.<sup>442</sup> When talking about her aunt, hereditary chief Georgina Amos said: 'she did lots of things with me, seasonal things like berry picking, clam picking when there were clams, when it was clam season.'<sup>443</sup>

The islands provided useful places for salmon fisheries, with each family group possessing a large smoke house where fish and small mammals could be smoked and preserved. There were important sites for producing dogfish oil, reflecting the trading importance of this economic commodity in the latter half of the nineteenth century, plus the netting of geese and swans, an activity that took place over the sides of canoes, paddled by women.<sup>444</sup>

The sheltered locations afforded a rich supply of food resources that easily catered for the regular occurrence of ceremonies and gatherings. Barkley Sound and other sheltered harbours along the west-coast were important anchorages for ships and trading activities, shellfish gathering, cormorant hunting sites, lookouts for sea migrating mammals as well as whale and seal hunting. In the summer, people moved to the outer exposed islands to catch small cod used as bait for larger fish, kelp greenling in basket traps with mussels as bait, and

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<sup>441</sup> Sapir, E. & Swadesh, M. (1955) *Native Accounts of Nootka Ethnography* International Journal of American Linguistics, 21:4; Hoover, A.L. (Ed.)(2000) *Nuu'Chah'Nulth Voices*; Arima, E.Y., St. Claire, D., Clamhouse, L., Edgar, J., Jones, C. & Thomas, J. (Eds.)(1991) *Between Ports Alberni and Renfrew*.

<sup>442</sup> Sapir, E. & Swadesh, M. *Native Accounts of Nootka*; detail in Chapter 5.

<sup>443</sup> Interview with Georgina Amos, 27<sup>th</sup> April 2010, in Zeballos: p.6 of transcript; a number of the women mentioned the importance of women and children harvesting clams from the beach, it was a common past-time as well as providing food for the winter. Excess clams were dried and smoked for winter use.

<sup>444</sup> Sapir, E. & Swadesh, M. *Native Accounts of Nootka*, pp31-32.

whaling. There were rich offshore halibut banks, sealing, good sea-lion hunting particularly on the small islets along the western shores of the islands, sea-otter sites around Clarke Island, and plenty of salmon. The list of fish harvests from the seas appears to be endless.

Nuu'Chah'Nulth women were occupied throughout the year cleaning and gutting, drying, preserving and smoking fish, canning, jarring, and bottling, making sure the abundance of food was never wasted but lasted throughout the winter months. Nothing was wasted; any excess was given to less fortunate families; nobody went hungry. The winter months was the time for ceremonies, for gatherings when women were kept busy organising, managing, and preparing great quantities of food to share with others.

As numerous sea-lions moved to more sheltered islands during rough weather, and stone tidal-traps were used to catch small fish such as perch, there was plenty of work for the women. Salmon and steelhead were plentiful in the rivers; cinquefoil root, camas, wild onion, lady fern, blackberries, and clover were dug at the mouths of rivers, and dogfish caught in the inlets. The people feasted on clams and dried mussels; crab apples, blueberries, and salal berries were harvested, cleaned, jarred, canned and preserved; traps were baited with salmon roe to lure and set for water fowl; grasses, fern roots, cedar bark, and reeds were gathered for weaving baskets, hats, and mats. An economic cycle that utilised a wide variety of renewable resources in a seasonal round of activities extending from the Alberni Valley to the outer islands of Barkley Sound, north along the coast and across Nuu'Chah'Nulth lands. The list of economic and sustainable activities appears to be limitless, a wealth of food to sustain life.

The women's lives demonstrate a rich and sustainable lifestyle living in harmonious co-existence with the sea and the land providing all that was needed to survive.<sup>445</sup> By the beginning of the twentieth century halibut drying by the women was prevalent<sup>446</sup> as were activities linked to the salmon industry, utilising family smoke houses extensively for smoking both fish and meat. Yet again we are indebted to the words of Sproat who, in 1868, gives a clear indication of the importance of women in the economic viability of Nuu'Chah'Nulth society when he succinctly says:

"The women do all the work of the camps, prepare fur-skins, collect roots and berries, take charge of the fish on the canoes reaching the shore, manage the cooking, and prepare food for winter. They also make mats, straw-hats and capes, wreathes and ornamental niceties of grass or cedar-fibre. I have met women in the woods in

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<sup>445</sup> Detail on types of fishing and hunting to be found in Sproat, G.M. (1868) in chapters XXII and XXIII.

<sup>446</sup> PN 1248 and PN 1249: photographs of halibut drying and Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, 1902, located in the Ethnography Department, Royal BC Museum, Victoria; also PN 17532, Halibut Fishers, 1915, by Edward Curtis.



autumn, at four o'clock in the morning, staggering under a great burden of cedar-bark."<sup>447</sup>

By the late nineteenth century, a positive portrait of what reserve life had to offer First Nation women was being promoted, when convenient, by the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA).

A powerful conviction was held by many colonisers who believed they were behaving altruistically towards people as it was widely held if Aboriginal people were dispossessed from their nomadic habits or seasonal movements, Aboriginal women would be:

Mistress of her home, and not a servile, degraded beast of burden continually on the move from camp to camp. She would acquire discipline, modesty, and cleanliness:<sup>448</sup> [virtues colonisers believed were impossible in traditional Aboriginal society].

The tendency of Europeans to think Aboriginal women were subjugated by their men persists, the writings in the journals of Captain Cook, John Jewitt, John Meares, Mozzino, and, more recently, G.M. Sproat, not read. Nuu'Chah'Nulth women knew they could maintain their traditional roles, albeit altered, as they continued to be engaged in the pursuits and occupations with which they were familiar, housekeeping, rearing children, making clothes and woven goods, caring for the sick and elderly, gathering and preserving food, as well as involvement in the economies of waged-labour in canneries and the fishing industries.

Although there is limited consideration of the many diverse aspects of First Nation women's lives in the early years of reserve settlement, several contradictory theories have emerged. It is suggested there was a slight gain for women during the transition to reserve life in the late nineteenth century, and certainly more than for men. Goldfrank's<sup>449</sup> study of the Blood Indians of Alberta in 1945 illustrates this view as she concludes the law now protected women's property and their person, emphasising the Indian Act favoured women in matters of inheritance.<sup>450</sup> The argument women's traditional roles persisted while the male role of hunter/fisher decreased has been influential in the analysis of transition to reserve life. It is said reserve life assisted the flexibility, adaptability and ingenuity of women who were better able to adapt to changes imposed by the dominant white culture. Women provided the 'essential stability and continuity in their communities,' reflected through the control they

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<sup>447</sup> Sproat, G.M. *Scenes and Studies* p.93; Chapter XII, Condition of Women.

<sup>448</sup> Carter, S. (1996) 'First Nations Women of Prairie Canada in the Early Reserve Years, the 1870s to the 1920s: A Preliminary Inquiry' in Miller, C. & Chuchryk, P. (Eds.)(2001) *Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom, and Strength*, University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg: pp51-75.

<sup>449</sup> Esther Schiff Goldfrank, 1896-1997, anthropologist, accompanied and studied with anthropologists Franz Boas and Elsie Clews Parsons; Goldfrank coined the phrase 'Papa Franz'; in 1939 she studied the Blood Indians in Alberta under the direction of Ruth Benedict.

<sup>450</sup> Goldfrank, E.S. (1945) *Changing Configurations in the Social Organisation of a Blackfoot Tribe during the Reserve Period* (The Blood of Alberta), Monographs of the American Ethnological Society, No. 8, edited by A. Irving Hallowell, University of Washington Press, Seattle: p.46.

wielded over the distribution of resources within families and communities.<sup>451</sup> Women adapted more readily and easily to additional responsibilities; however, with men's ability to provide decreasing women had a double burden, to provide sustenance as well as engaging in waged-labour, not an enhanced world of opportunity but an altered and often diminishing role. The following story occurred in more recent times but illustrates the tenacity of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women.

My mum, she was very young and she couldn't live in Ahousaht anymore when my Dad died. All my siblings were scattered around town or in residential school so she moved to Nanaimo and she paced the streets until she got a job; that was the first time in her life she ever went on welfare. She was a dish-washer as laundries no longer existed.<sup>452</sup>

Despite some positive contributions from the settlers, by the end of the century the Nuu'Chah'Nulth were strangers in their own country, their culture under intensified assault. A number of reasons can be cited: the stock of sea otters was so decimated the trading of sea-otter pelt ceased; whaling, once a privilege of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth nobility, came to a halt; the abundance of fish, the staple diet of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, ended up in the nets of white fishermen and in their canneries; wage labour drove the people into economic dependency on the white man; Nuu'Chah'Nulth women derived some income from waged work in canneries and hop-fields; in addition, the traditional way of life was restricted by government 'Indian laws', the Indian Act, and Christian missionaries made renewed efforts to convert the Nuu'Chah'Nulth to Christianity in their continuing attempts to assimilate the people,<sup>453</sup> and in 1884, the government added an amendment to the Indian Act making the potlatch illegal.<sup>454</sup> Land reduction and reserve living affected women's economic role as their fishing and skinning skills did not have such importance in their lives, and families began to rely more and more on government hand-outs.<sup>455</sup> With the passing of the Indian Act most of the power on any Reserve was held by the federal agent for the Department of Indian Affairs<sup>456</sup> who also controlled government money and, more importantly, could veto any decisions made by the Reserve Tribal Councils. Nuu'Chah'Nulth lives were controlled by federal, provincial, and county government; the freedom to live as they once had lived quickly disappearing.

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<sup>451</sup> Goldfrank, E.S. *Changing Configurations*: p.52-54; Powers, Marla N. (1986) *Oglala Women: Myth, Ritual and Reality* University of Chicago Press.

<sup>452</sup> Interview with Louise, 30<sup>th</sup> April 2010 in Nanaimo: pp8-9 of transcript; she worked in the local hotel.

<sup>453</sup> Lokschuppen – Rosenheim: Exhibition 'Indians: Indigenous Peoples of North America': 8<sup>th</sup> April – 6<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

<sup>454</sup> The potlatch, a festival, ceremony or gathering was a gift-giving occasion, an example of a primary economic system. The potlatch ban was finally repealed in 1951.

<sup>455</sup> Interview with Ina and Charlotte, May 2009: p.5 of transcript.

<sup>456</sup> Now called the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, DIAND.

A sense of unease grew amongst the Nuu'Chah'Nulth as these changes started to strongly influence their lives. Land reduction modified economic capabilities so women sought new avenues of income, adapting the skills they already possessed to develop innovative ways to retain aspects of their traditional lifestyles although they were thwarted by the imposition of residential schooling. It became the time when women attempted to balance their culture with the growing constraints of settler/colonial mentality.

People were motivated to preserve what they believed were the dying remnants of Aboriginal culture by accumulating artefacts, documents and curios. The northwest Pacific coast became the focus of attention for explorers, anthropologists, scientists, tourists, and settlers vying for Indian artefacts, resources, and land: Edward Curtis, whose photographs became the visual representation of the 'vanishing Indian', began his career in the area; Franz Boas documented the people, their culture and traditions;<sup>457</sup> and it was the destination of several prominent and well-funded scientific expeditions.<sup>458</sup> All were assured the Aboriginal people were vanishing, so their image needed to be captured for posterity, for historical records and to attract tourists and settlers, and more importantly to advertise the availability of land and resources.

There was strength within the family unit so no matter what the impact of all those external sources there was a strong core coming from my ancestors. ... It was embedded so deeply ... those external forces didn't destroy us. ... The women in my family were strong ... they strengthened our identity by trying to destroy it.<sup>459</sup>

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<sup>457</sup> Franz Boas, 1858-1942, is considered to be the founder of professional anthropology; a German-American anthropologist and pioneer of modern anthropology, he was called the 'father of American anthropology', who promoted Darwin's ideas. Boas made twelve visits to the area 1886-1930. Boas originated the notion of 'culture' as learned behaviour; he was the mentor for Edward Sapir, Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict and Alfred Kroeber. He has inspired many generations of anthropologists to study and record 'vanishing cultures', especially Native Americans.

<sup>458</sup> The Jessop North Pacific Expedition, 1897-1903, was organised by Franz Boas; the Harriman Expedition, 1899, carried John Muir and Edward Curtis to Alaska; Early anthropologists and observers often ignored the women who contributed to the economic survival of their communities.

<sup>459</sup> Interview with Eileen, May 2009: p.11 of transcript.

# Chapter Five:

## Images and Reality, 1893-1951

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The Nuu'Chah'Nulth lived by the sea in the summertime and then they moved inland in the wintertime; you would go by big dug-out canoe made of cedar wood and women would manage and run the canoes which was amazing because they were gigantic canoes.<sup>460</sup>

### Part 1: Images

This chapter examines the image of the 'Indian' from the Chicago World Fair in 1893 to the reworked Indian Act 1951, through the lens of recording Indian society before it disappeared. It was a time of change for the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, a time when they were adjusting to altered and changing economic conditions, when family life and communities were disrupted due to residential schooling and reserve living, a time when traditions, language and culture were curtailed. So it is essential to look at the 'Image of the Indian', to consider depictions of Aboriginal people in the context of cultural and social change, how Aboriginal imagery affected policy in Canada, how it shaped and continues to shape people's understanding of Aboriginal people,<sup>461</sup> and how policy had the effect of allowing negative cultural stereotypes to be preserved. Consideration is given, in particular, to Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, the effects of residential schooling on their lives and their changing economic roles.

The turn of the century was a time when it was believed Aboriginal population numbers were rapidly declining, when Social Darwinism was being applied to ideologies of race and racism, when Frederick Jackson Turner's 'Frontier Thesis'<sup>462</sup> was thoroughly debated across America. People continued to record, photograph, analyse and study Aboriginal people as the prevailing belief in the demise of the people persisted, a belief continuing into the 1930s. Artists, writers and photographers were keen to preserve a record of a vanishing race, perpetuating the enduring image of Aboriginal people: artists Paul Kane and Emily Carr, photographer Edward Sheriff Curtis and linguist, Edward Sapir all expressed their varied

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<sup>460</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009: pp16-17 of transcript; an image of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women that continued through the early part of the twentieth century. They used canoes to travel to pick hops and berries around Puget Sound. The comments express a powerful image of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women at the turn of the century.

<sup>461</sup> Francis, Daniel (2004) *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*, Arsenal Pulp Press, Vancouver, BC p.5; Gidley, M. (Ed.)(1994) *Representing Others: White Views of Indigenous Peoples*, University of Exeter Press, UK.

<sup>462</sup> Turner, Frederick Jackson (1893) *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*: a paper delivered to the American Historical Association during the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893; see also Tom Kings Massey lecture, FN398.

opinions of Aboriginal people through word or picture.<sup>463</sup> The influences of people, politics, and place were present within these visual representations. It was a time of placing people within new contexts and frames of reference (which were manipulated by those creating the images in photographs, books and paintings) in which Aboriginal people interacted with flourishing settler communities, experiencing new economic opportunities in early twentieth-century Canada. The landscape was being re-imagined as one in which Aboriginal people were absent, the photographs and pictures being a record of a disappearing race, and in the process having a significant impact upon the composition of that image. These images suggested little of the complexity of their culture, simply portraying people of a bygone age.<sup>464</sup> Images have very little to do with reality as there is no such thing as a typical 'Indian', so relationships with the mamalhn'i meant people forged a new identity as 'Indians'.<sup>465</sup> Additionally, the underlying problem or challenge of linking history with these photographic historical images is the lack of accompanying documentation explaining the people, the place and the instance.<sup>466</sup>

## Photographs and Paintings

The photographic project of North American Indians, Edward S. Curtis's life work, is considered to be the largest anthropological study ever undertaken.<sup>467</sup> Not since Catlin had any non-Aboriginal person committed themselves so comprehensively to a visual documentation of the

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<sup>463</sup> Photographer Joseph Kossuth Dixon who travelled between 1908 and 1913 with sponsored store heir Rodman Wanamaker popularised sentiments about 'the vanishing race' with his photographs in Tom Robotham's (2004) *Native Americans in Early Photographs*, World Publications Group Inc., North Dighton, MA; Geraldine Moodie portrays a distinctive perspective on the Arctic, 1903-1905, through photographs; more importantly she provides a feminised photographic interpretation of the Arctic more often seen through a masculine lens.

<sup>464</sup> Misleading stereotypes in Indian imagery did not go unchallenged. At the Chicago Exposition 1893 which attempted to bolster America's image as a progressive industrial society by contrasting civilised America with a primitive non-western world, it was suggested the Expositions image of Aboriginal people was not representative of the modern Indian; & Charles Eastman, 1858-1939, an alumnus of the Indian Boarding School, Dartmouth College & Boston University Medical School, used his skills as lecturer & writer to try and counter the negative stereotypes by promoting positive images of Aboriginal people in his books & magazine articles.

<sup>465</sup> An exhibition of 'Indians: Indigenous Peoples of North America' at Lokschuppen, Rosenheim, Germany from April 8<sup>th</sup> to November 6<sup>th</sup> 2011. I visited the exhibition on Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

<sup>466</sup> Good examples are: *The Bark Gatherer* (1915), pn4852, and *The Seaweed Gatherer* (1915), pn4853, both photographs of un-named Nuu'Chah'Nulth women taken by Curtis; copies located in the Royal BC Museum, Victoria, accessed April 2012.

<sup>467</sup> Gidley, Mick (2000) *Edward S. Curtis and the North American Indian, Incorporated*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK; the Curtis project comprised twenty volumes of illustrated text and twenty portfolios of large-size photogravures; the Native American people were photographed (and the pictures assembled) from 1898 for three decades until 1930; Curtis produced about forty thousand negatives, and more than 2000 were published; over eighty different Aboriginal groups living west of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, from Alaska to California that, according to Curtis, still retained their 'primitive' customs and traditions, were represented; see King, T. (2003) *The Truth about Stories*: p.32.

lives of Aboriginal people and their culture.<sup>468</sup> Curtis wanted to capture these images before the people and their culture disappeared, using the strengths of photography to frame people's perceptions of Aboriginal people. Like many intellectuals of the day, Curtis thought that while the European was set to develop and expand the Americas, the future for Aboriginal people was extinction. It is true their way of life was changing, lands were reduced due to expanding settlement and governmental policy, and population numbers decreasing because of imported diseases;<sup>469</sup> nevertheless, the people were not disappearing, they were adapting to the considerable changes happening to their way of life. However, one cannot dismiss Curtis' momentous contribution to the visual history of First Nation women.

In Vancouver, Emily Carr undertook a similar project but through art. In 1913, at an exhibition of her paintings of Northwest Coast First Nations, she referred to the people as 'relics of its first primitive greatness. ... Only a few more years and they will be gone forever, into silent nothingness.'<sup>470</sup> Like Curtis, she saw her paintings as a visual record of a condemned people. Emily Carr had had relatively little exposure to First Nation people, limited to those she had seen around Victoria when she was growing up and a visit to Ucluelet in 1898, but she felt a 'strong fascination for the Indian', a great sympathy although little understanding of their plight.<sup>471</sup> Like others at the time, she took it for granted they were vanishing so her work sought to preserve an idealised image not the reality of Aboriginal people.

Canadian artist, Paul Kane,<sup>472</sup> provides another valuable source of information for ethnologists through his paintings, sketches and detailed notes. His work is considered to be part of Canadian heritage but it is a misrepresentation of the people: it is on historical record he admitted embellishing his paintings, departing from the accuracy of his field sketches in

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<sup>468</sup> George Catlin was motivated by the desire to depict 'the living manners, customs and character of an interesting race of people who are rapidly passing away from the face of the earth...And who have no historians or biographers of their own to portray with fidelity their native looks and history': in Robotham (2004) *ibid.*, p.7; 'George Catlin: American Indian Portraits', National Portrait Gallery, 7<sup>th</sup> March-23<sup>rd</sup> June 2013.

<sup>469</sup> In the main, diseases affecting the northwest Pacific First Nations were tuberculosis, smallpox, measles, and sexually transmitted diseases.

<sup>470</sup> Francis, D. *The Imaginary Indian*, p.31; Freund, A. & Thomson, A. (Eds.)(2011) *Oral History and Photography*, Palgrave Studies in Oral History, Palgrave Macmillan, New York: photographs reflect how oral history can best be understood, using photographs in the interpretation of oral history.

<sup>471</sup> Francis, D. *The Imaginary Indian*, p.31; Ucluelet is located on the west-coast of Vancouver Island

<sup>472</sup> Paul Kane, September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1810 – February 20<sup>th</sup> 1871; Canadian painter famous for his paintings of First Nations people in Western Canada; he met George Catlin around 1843 in London on his promotion tour for his book *Letters & Notes on the Manners, Customs and Conditions of the Native American Indians*, a book in which Catlin had argued that Aboriginal culture was disappearing and should be recorded before passing into oblivion. Having listened to Catlin's compelling arguments on the demise of Aboriginal people, Kane decided to document them through his pictures.

favour of more dramatic scenes.<sup>473</sup> His large oil paintings reinterpret his sketches creating parodies of his compositions and drawings. The reasons given were knowledge and understanding of his clientele: they were unlikely to hang copies of his field sketches in their homes so he painted Aboriginal people in a 'European style' more acceptable at that time as photographers and artists pandered to the demand of the Euro-American market for images of 'genuine Indians'. While viewing Kane's work in 1877, Davin had remarked: 'The Indian horses are Greek horses, the hills much of the colour and form of ... early European landscape painters',<sup>474</sup> clearly showing how artists paid lip service to authenticity, depicting the 'Indian' in the expected European framework.

Similarly, in order to ensure Curtis found what he was seeking, and to guarantee he could reproduce genuine portrayals, Curtis took on his travels a box of 'Indian paraphernalia, wigs, blankets, painted backdrops, clothing, in case he ran into Indians who did not look as the Indian was supposed to look.'<sup>475</sup> By his own admission, Curtis wanted to depict Aboriginal people as he imagined they had been before Europeans arrived making the people more 'Indian' reflecting his stereotype of how an 'Indian' looked and dressed. To achieve this goal, he posed, re-clothed, and positioned his chosen subjects in costumes and in ways he believed represented the people.<sup>476</sup> By manipulating his photographs, Curtis reinforced stereotypical views of Aboriginal people, images which survive to this day.<sup>477</sup>

In 1911, after a performance of Curtis's musicale on Native American cultures, Franklin Hooper, an eminent scientist,<sup>478</sup> is reputed to have said Curtis was the first person to present

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<sup>473</sup> Paul Kane (1859) *The Wanderings of an Artist Among the Indians of North America from Canada to Vancouver's Island and Oregon through the Hudson's Bay Company's territory and back Again*, originally published by Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts in London; illustrated lithographs of his own sketches.

<sup>474</sup> Nicholas Flood Davin: see detail of his work and thoughts in Chapter 4 particularly on education of First Nations; quote found at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_Kane](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Kane) - comparisons to European likenesses.

<sup>475</sup> King, T. *The Truth about Stories*, p.34.

<sup>476</sup> Jackson, P. "Constructions of Culture, Representations of Race: Edward Curtis's 'Way of Seeing'" in Anderson, K. & Gale, F. (1992) *Inventing Places*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, pp89-106; Curtis, E. (1915) *The North American Indian: The Indians of the United States, the Dominion of Canada, and Alaska, Volume 10, Introduction*, Plimpton Press, Norwood, MASS; Savard, Dan (2010) *Images from the Likeness, House*, Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria.

<sup>477</sup> Partly to raise money for his photographic epic, Curtis produced a pioneering documentary motion picture *In the Land of the Head-Hunters*, a lurid tale of love and warfare among the Kwakwaka'wakw of Northern Vancouver Island. Curtis included everything 'Indian' in the film – a whale hunt, a battle scene. The film title was chosen to appeal to a white audience as were many of the scenes in the film.

<sup>478</sup> Franklin Hooper was the Director of the Brooklyn Institute: Hooper believed he was getting 'reality' in the picture-opera but in fact, it was an illusion of reality; a study of Curtis' performance maybe found in M. Gidley 'The Vanishing Race in Sight & Sound: Edward S. Curtis' Musicales of North American Indian Life' in Jack Salzman (Ed.)(1987) *Prospects, Volume 12* Cambridge & New York: pp59-87; see Murray, D. (1991) *Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing, and Representation in North American Indian Texts*, Bloomington, London: pp35-37.

the real Indian. As Aboriginal people were political subjects of society at that time, the people and their culture were being misrepresented through photographs, the theatre and Canadian policy. By denying the complexity of Aboriginal society, in particular the strengths of the women, the myth of a primitive race juxtaposed against settler mentality is perpetuated.<sup>479</sup>

European conventions of genre prevailed in Curtis's photographs; for instance, the photograph of the 'Whaler' (1915) depicts a Makah man holding a harpoon standing on a 'heavy seal-skin float' despite the fact whales had not been hunted by the Makah for over a generation.<sup>480</sup> This falsification accentuates the misrepresentation of these people posing questions in people's minds. Is it possible to understand another's culture from photographs? Or is it just a fleeting glimpse offering little in understanding? As Aboriginal life was changing under the pressure of political impositions, so photographs needed to reflect these changes and present the people appropriately. Curtis, in a letter to Hodge<sup>481</sup> argued strongly his pictures were reconstructions: Aboriginal culture was changing so it was necessary to portray representations of 'authentic Indians' reflecting a European perception of everyday Aboriginal life, images of the way things were. Although the people have been removed from their familiar and traditional contexts, the viewer 'is reassured that everything is in its proper place.'<sup>482</sup> Photographs equal displacement, framing the way people are perceived out of context, as the process removes the person from that setting. So, Curtis dislocates the people in his posed pictures.<sup>483</sup>

Not everyone wanted the people portrayed with nineteenth century imagery. There were repeated claims people were wrongly dressed in Curtis's images, clothed to match European expectations, 'a picturesque genre approach to Native American culture.'<sup>484</sup> However, the following example poses a dilemma for both the colonised and the colonisers.<sup>485</sup>

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<sup>479</sup> Francis, D *The Imaginary Indian* *ibid*; Gidley, M. *Representing Others*., Curtis offered something that stood for 'an aspect of reality', p.1; Robotham, Tom (2004) *ibid.*, recent thinking on representations of other cultures is indebted to Edward Said's 'Orientalism' (1988), a summary of western conceptions, highlighting common misconceptions which interweave understandings of colonialism.

<sup>480</sup> The Makah are part of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth Nation; their lands form the northwest tip of Washington State. The photograph of the whaler was posed and taken in 1915. The Makah man wore a wig in the photograph, one of the many examples of props Curtis carried with him on his travels; Gidley, Mick (2000) *ibid.*, p.70; see also Cote, C. *Spirits of our Whaling Ancestors*; Erikson, Patricia P., with Helma Ward & Kirk Wachendorf *Voices of a Thousand People*.

<sup>481</sup> Frederick Webb Hodge of the Bureau of American Ethnology, editor of the 'Journal the American Anthropologist' and what was to become the standard reference work 'Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico': 2 volumes, 1910: Gidley, M. *Representing Others* p.279.

<sup>482</sup> Gidley, M. *Representing Others*: pp72-73.

<sup>483</sup> Displaced ... Displacement of people raises the question: how do you place the people and where?

<sup>484</sup> Gidley, M. *Representing Others*: p.74.

<sup>485</sup> See: Moser, Charles (1925) *Reminiscences of the West Coast of Vancouver Island* Kakawis, BC; McMillan, A. *Since the Time of the Transformers*.



In 1881, Father Brabant,<sup>486</sup> believing the traditional dress of the blanket worn by Nuu'Chah'Nulth women had no place in society, introduced white style clothing to the women who traded dog-fish oil for printed calico, flour, molasses and tobacco. Although Nuu'Chah'Nulth elders were adamant that change was not good, with their earnings from wage-labour the younger women bought European clothes, preferring to wear western rather than traditional dress. By the end of the century white-styled clothing prevailed, so the pictures taken by Curtis were denounced as fakes as nobody dressed in traditional clothing when cameras were absent.

Despite misgivings about the way the Aboriginal people are represented, photographs do have a historical value as they depict an aspect, albeit partial, of the history, culture, clothing, environment, and ceremonies of Aboriginal people. Curtis's photographic images provide a portfolio of evidence, and are considered an important example of historical testimony as the pictures, although staged, represent someone; they are not fictional but a photographic instance taken at a pertinent time in history. However, there is a dilemma: on the one hand photographs provide irrefutable evidence of women's role, on the other, Curtis rarely acknowledges the women by name, instead using a generic term. Is this because he did not ask for their name; did he think their names irrelevant, unnecessary or unimportant? Was Curtis implicitly providing evidence and confirmation of European perceptions in his photographs of First Nation women as second class citizens?

Photography has the capacity to unsettle historical accounts, portraying people in familiar settings but in an unfamiliar way, and Curtis's habit of not naming the women he has photographed caused disquiet amongst the Nuu'Chah'Nulth. In the early part of the twentieth century Curtis photographed Virginia Tom, a Hesquiaht/Nuu'Chah'Nulth woman. In the photograph she is standing looking out to sea wearing traditional bark clothing, a cape and a headband, and carrying a burden basket strapped to her head. It is a very striking image, a typical Curtis pose staged for his glass-plate camera but for her daughter, Alice Paul, there was concern and unhappiness:

I'm always seeing her picture ... Every time I look at the books she's there. But they never use her name, just 'Hesquiaht Woman'. But I know her name. It's Virginia Tom.<sup>487</sup>

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<sup>486</sup> Father Augustin Brabant, Belgian, was the first priest to live on the west-coast; he was based at Hesquiaht and attempted to Christianise the people, 1875-1903. Brabant died in 1913 in Victoria; see also <http://www.cchahistory.ca/journal/CCHA1983-84/Gough.pdf>.

<sup>487</sup> Kirk, Ruth (1986) *Tradition & Change on the Northwest Coast: the Makah, Nuu'Chah'Nulth, Southern Kwakiutl and Nuxalt*, University of Washington Press, Seattle: p.15; Clifford, J. (1997) *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. P.129; Virginia Tom worked in one of the local canneries, her husband worked on a sealing schooner; photograph

Virginia Tom was specifically singled out by Curtis because of her excellent weaving skills, skills that have continued to be passed down through the generations to her great-granddaughters. She was adept at weaving clothes, hats, capes, mats, and baskets from cedar bark, spruce and local sedge grasses. Even today, Virginia Tom's family are extremely unhappy about the discourtesy Curtis paid her by not naming her. Her descendants are, understandably, very proud of their great-grandmother but, like so many other members of this vast family, are sad Virginia Tom's name was not added to the photograph. In an interview in May 2010, I am proudly told of Virginia Tom's weaving abilities by her great-granddaughter:

'My great-grandmother was a master weaver who worked in the fish plant, in the cannery. She wove the basket in the photograph, a burden basket made of spruce roots that is worn on the head.'<sup>488</sup>

Ruth Kirk uses this photograph of Virginia Tom very effectively in her narrative about the accomplishments of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women. She includes, as a comparison, a contemporary named picture of another of Virginia Tom's great-granddaughters, a graduate of the University British Columbia Law School. In using these two photographs, Kirk establishes the accomplishments from two generations of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women spanning three-quarters of a century, from 'cedar bark to law school.'<sup>489</sup>

The photographs collected by Curtis should not be dismissed lightly as they constitute social and economic evidence from the early part of the twentieth century. The issue for Aboriginal people relates to the reasons why the photographs were taken, the consequences for the people in the way they were portrayed, as Curtis reflects a perspective these were a primitive people whose traditional culture and way of life were fast disappearing. In his representations of these people as a vanishing race, Curtis echoed the prevailing views held by Euro-Americans. Ideally, photographs should be considered as a testimony to the Nuu'Chah'Nulth people and their culture, catching a visual impression of the people at that time, alongside other forms of evidence: oral histories, artefacts and archives.<sup>490</sup> However, it is important not to lose sight of the fact if these are falsified images, then the photographs themselves represent partial truths or are partly inaccurate. Photographs provide just one insight of an Aboriginal worldview, and given a historians questioning of what is 'true',

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viewed in April 2012 in the Ethnography department in the Archives at the Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria.

<sup>488</sup> Interview with Genevieve, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010; Genevieve is related to Virginia Tom through her father's line, her great-grandmother Eugene Tom was the sister of Virginia; it can be difficult at times to appreciate the relationships between generations as many of the younger family members call Elders or great-aunts their grandmother; the quote supports this but the relationship was explained to me in the interview. Now, the photograph is named appropriately when it is on display.

<sup>489</sup> Kirk, R. *Tradition & Change*, p.15.

<sup>490</sup> [www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca/](http://www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca/)

especially from the vantage point of the twenty-first century, all these photographs could be seen as 'versions' of the truth. The stereotypes portrayed and disseminated through photographs have had a significant impact upon socio-cultural understandings of Aboriginal people, and continue to do so today, adding to a continuing debate about 'authenticity' and misrepresentation.

As a contrast to Curtis's work the painter, Eastman Johnson,<sup>491</sup> portrayed Aboriginal people with accuracy and, even more significantly, a strong sensibility of the people he had come to know personally during his two year stay in the Great Lakes region in the middle of the nineteenth century. Johnson's careful portrayal of named individuals rather than the stereotypical poses recorded by Curtis enhances the realism of his paintings. His drawings and paintings, depicting Ojibwa women in informal and relaxed settings rather than the more stylised formal paintings of the period, are full of detail and feeling, and perceived as faithful renderings of real people. Also highly unusual at that time, and unlike Curtis, Johnson included the women's Ojibwa name in the title of the painting. By naming them, Johnson is honouring the women: 'Sha-wen-ne-gun, Midosuay Beek, Notin e garbo-wik, Ka-be-sen-day-way-We-Win and Wigemar Wasung.'<sup>492</sup>

In 1857, Johnson drew Wigemar Wasung's face and dress as carefully as a society portrait of western women; Ojibwa adornments were detailed although it has been thought the feather in the young women's hair was added by Johnson to 'Europeanise' her Indian dress. He depicts women in natural poses in real settings involving everyday activities: groups of women talking, a young mother nursing her baby in a cradleboard with her sisters sitting nearby, a mother with her young child, demonstrating the confidence in and acceptance these women had of Johnson. His knowledge of the people ensured success in getting Ojibwa women to sit and pose for him. The Ojibwa artist, Carl Gawboy, believes the faces in Johnson's portraits are recognisable in Ojibwa community today: 'they are our real ancestral portraits because we can still see those faces today.'<sup>493</sup> Gawboy is convinced the time Johnson spent in Ojibwa society changed his approach to painting, allowing him space to capture the humanity of the people. Johnson's legacy offers a rare portrayal of Aboriginal people at an unsettled time in Canadian history.

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<sup>491</sup> Eastman Johnson, July 1824-April 1906, American painter, known for his Ojibwa-themed paintings and charcoal drawings, and co-founder of Metropolitan Museum of Art: in 1857 lived and painted amongst Anishinaabe, Ojibwa near Lake Superior.

<sup>492</sup> Since it was an oral society spellings have varied leading to confusion over the identification of some of the women; <http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/6aa/6aa427.htm> and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastman\\_Johnson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastman_Johnson).

<sup>493</sup> <http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2006/06/30/eastmanjohnson/>; Ojibwa artist Carl Gawboy uses Johnson's portraits as a resource for his own work.

Two contrasting approaches to photographing First Nation women are thus witnessed: Johnson's sympathetic and sensitive approach honouring the women, recognising they are women with individual names against a harsher approach by Curtis, whose attempt to portray Aboriginal women becomes distorted in his desire to present the 'beautiful savage' for a European market. It is appreciated the two artists were not producing their likenesses of Aboriginal women at the same time, as half a century separated their work, but it appears to be Johnson who respects the women rather than the later, dismissive approach by Curtis. The images say as much about the photographer or artist and the society from which they hail as they do about the women depicted in the images.

Many of the pictures and photographs of First Nation women in existence, either in archives or personal collections, are undated, unplaced, floating in a vacuum. Captions are brief, the people not identified or named either by their given name, their colonial name or even the band to which they belong. Some images were used as propaganda to record either a vanishing culture or to aid assimilation.<sup>494</sup> In general, photographs show Aboriginal women as subservient to a dominant male figure, the women sitting on the ground looking away from the camera or in a pose of domestic activity. While this would not be an uncommon scene in the aboriginal world, once the photograph is taken out of context, taken out of the community and displayed to a non-native audience or placed in a new context such as a book or museum, the voiceless woman suffers the further indignity of becoming a negative stereotype.<sup>495</sup>

Photographs should reflect the strengths of Aboriginal women so providing an extraordinary chronicle of First Nation women.<sup>496</sup> Photographs reveal an image of the women in question, a narrative about the history of a specific people at a particular time, an interpretation or perception of the lives of First Nation women. However, consider the following questions about photographs of Aboriginal people. Is the person's individuality still visible? Is it possible to perceive the defiance or acquiescence of the situation they have been subjected to? Do the people represent the colonial experience or is resistance or acceptance visible in their faces? Lippard makes an interesting observation when she says: 'White people need to surrender the right to represent everybody, the colonial overview'.<sup>497</sup> For many

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<sup>494</sup> Lippard, Lucy (Ed.)(1992) *Partial Recall: with Essays on Photographs of Native North Americans*, The New Press, New York, p.15; evidence in Archives in Victoria, BC: viewed April 2012.

<sup>495</sup> From comments made by Madeleine Dion-Stout (Cree) Professor at Carleton University – A voice for Aboriginal women.

<sup>496</sup> Evidenced April 2012 in the Archives, Ethnography Department, Royal British Columbia Museum; there are two drawers of Nuu'Chah'Nulth photographs in situ, a mixture of posed Curtis and relaxed family photographs, named and un-named; good examples of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women selling baskets on the curb-side and dockside.

<sup>497</sup> Lippard, L. *Partial Recall*: p.13.

reasons the past is hidden from us as photographs are staged or adapted to portray people's expectations or propaganda. However, the cameraman can also be hidden. In her comments about her mother's photograph, Alice Paul makes a perceptive remark: 'I remember the camera too, and the man all covered up under there with that black cloth',<sup>498</sup> suggesting there was something to be hidden, or omitted, in photographs. Many images of First Nations have been produced but these likenesses should be considered with both scepticism and hope. On the positive side, new interpretations can change views and perceptions by adding a name, by explaining the context, the place, and the stories surrounding the photograph,<sup>499</sup> while remembering there is a negative power to historical photographs, misinterpretation. What is noticeable and significant about Curtis' pictures is a relative dearth of smiling people so the picture of 'Clayoquot Girl' (1915)<sup>500</sup> is more unusual as she is smiling. Many photographs depict unsmiling people, grave with expressions of resignation, at one with their surroundings, perpetuating the enduring image of stoic 'Indian melancholy', the resignation implying the inevitable demise of a people, the vanishing Indian in the face of the triumph of civilisation and colonisation.

By the 1880s, mass commercial photography enabled the envisioning of Canada for immigration purposes revealing a welcoming country with space and land, a portrayal of a brief historical past. Photographs depicted people, fantasy or factual did not matter, offering a vision of Canada as a burgeoning country, created for a white audience. Visual descriptions shaped national identity but none included pictures of women or Aboriginal people. You could question where the women were in this nation-building programme. The answer is simple: European women were involved in the printing process, the publications, pamphlets, prints and photographs of Canada, and in educating children about Canada; Aboriginal women were absent from all advertising propaganda although by the end of the nineteenth century it did become more acceptable to allude to Aboriginal people as portrayals of savagery through photography.<sup>501</sup>

## Artefacts and Curios

Although Curtis is remembered as a photographer, he also purchased aboriginal artefacts – family blankets, clothing, baskets, and community memorabilia – for exhibition and sale in his

<sup>498</sup> Kirk, R. *Tradition and Change*: p.15.

<sup>499</sup> There are opportunities to add information to Nuu'Chah'Nulth family photographs, located in the Ethnography Department in the Royal BC Museum, Victoria.

<sup>500</sup> Clayoquot is on the west-coast of Vancouver Island near Tofino an important location in Nuu'Chah'Nulth history. Reference to the photograph in Gidley, M. *Representing Others*, p.279; pn17545 'Clayoquot Girl' (1915) by E. Curtis, copy in Ethnography Department, Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, seen April 2012.

<sup>501</sup> Lippard, L. *Partial Recall*.

gift shop in Seattle. Curtis wanted his studio to be an attraction for both tourists and local citizens to experience 'Indian pictures in an 'Indian' setting'<sup>502</sup> the photographic home of the North American Indian. Trading in Aboriginal artefacts was a strong element of the Curtis enterprise so he worked tirelessly to acquire the artefacts white people demanded. On July 31<sup>st</sup> 1899, at the end of the Harriman Expedition,<sup>503</sup> George Bird Grinnell purchased a number of baskets from Curtis; C. Hart Merriman<sup>504</sup> displayed Aboriginal baskets in his Washington home; and in May 1908, Curtis spent time acquiring baskets for Miss Charlotte Bowditch of Santa Barbara. She was particularly keen to own a Nuu'Chah'Nulth hat. In 1913 Curtis sold her one from his personal collection, with the promise of more hats, convinced he could persuade skilled Nuu'Chah'Nulth women weavers to sell their hats, a relatively easy undertaking as it provided much needed income for the women.<sup>505</sup>

A hundred years later, these hats are still in demand. Now, Nuu'Chah'Nulth women sell their hats for upwards of \$3500. When asked if she made and sold the Maquinna hats to order Lena Jumbo, a master weaver replied, chuckling to herself: "Yes, I was going to start putting my price up, I was going to start selling for \$2000; they sell them for \$3500 once it is in the store."<sup>506</sup>

Selling aboriginal art and artefacts, considered to be 'tourist art' or 'curios', was a common feature of ethnological activity at this time so Curtis was not unique in his pecuniary motive in these practices. For Curtis, this was business rather than honouring Aboriginal people, somehow less authentic because it was developed in the context of a cash economy. Selling to the curio market enabled Nuu'Chah'Nulth families to put food on their tables and, as weaving was an integral part of women's daily lives, in some way it is traditionally representative of their identity. Nuu'Chah'Nulth women modified their basket-weaving designs to accommodate the market for 'Indian' curiosities, for European 'taste', a practice embodying the adaptation of traditional values and skills to a demanding and changing Euro-American dominated market economy.

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<sup>502</sup> Gidley, M. *Representing Others*: p.81; Curtis' belief in the importance of recording and collecting archival evidence portraying people's lives is laudable as there now exists a vast collection of First Nation artefacts.

<sup>503</sup> Maritime expedition to Alaska arranged by Edward Harriman to explore and document Alaskan coast from Seattle to Alaska and Siberia; Curtis was one of the photographers; Curtis developed a close friendship with George Grinnell, an expert in Native American culture; moved by a 'dying way of life' Curtis spent most of his career documenting and photographing Native American culture; W. H. Goetzmann & K. Sloan (1982) *Looking Far North: The Harriman Expedition to Alaska, 1899*, The Viking Press, New York.

<sup>504</sup> Clinton Hart Merriman (Zoologist), Head of the Division of Economic, Ornithology and Mammalogy at the US Dep. of Agriculture, one of the founders of the National Geographic Society and collector.

<sup>505</sup> Gidley, M. *Representing Others*: p.81; Francis, D. *The Imaginary Indian*.

<sup>506</sup> Interview with Lena Jumbo, a Nuu'Chah'Nulth Elder, in Ahousaht, May 2010: p2 of transcript.

Well, she used to weave; she used to weave little doilies, they used to sell them for ten cents each. They [Euro-Americans] used to love it. ... My grandmother pretended she didn't speak any English so she'd say ... 'err, err' ... they loved to get them because they were made by her. She used to go out to the Princess Maquinna and the Princess Nora; she used to go out, sit on the dock and sell her work.<sup>507</sup>

These modifications made sense to Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, linking change to past traditions, ensuring continuity of their skills and traditions, and countering cultural invisibility.<sup>508</sup>

As Euro-Americans had their own perceptions of 'authentic Indians', Nuu'Chah'Nulth women shaped those imaginings in return, often to their benefit, utilizing this knowledge to access the social and economic means necessary for survival under colonisation, becoming collaborators in 'authenticity'. If asked why the people engaged with these impositions, the answer is simple: they had no choice. Participation brought economic gain. By 'playing-Indian', conforming to expectations provided an income. The World Fair in Chicago was an ideal place for this to happen.<sup>509</sup> The 1893 Chicago World's Fair<sup>510</sup> galvanised peoples interest in 'Indians', proving to be a launch pad for the Euro-American craze for Indian curios and artefacts, both tourists and anthropologists competing for these objects. In *Going Native*, Huhndorf<sup>511</sup> successfully examines the attempts of Euro-Americans to project their thoughts onto perceptions of cultural imagery and identity, by analysing Euro-American distortion of culture and traditions as seemingly harmless images and artefacts appear to re-enforce the continued oppression of Aboriginal people through the appropriation of 'native curios'. Her work exposes the relationships between colonialism and the production of culture through photographs and cultural artefacts. Between 1880 and 1930, Aboriginal people were overshadowed by the 'symbolic Indian', and this image received far more attention than the people themselves. Glover's drawings of the canoes moored alongside Seattle's waterfront illustrates this point by capturing moments of the past and the present, weaving together two periods in Seattle's Indian story.<sup>512</sup>

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<sup>507</sup> Ibid., p.4-55 of transcript; both Lena and her grandmother were Master Weavers.

<sup>508</sup> See Erikson, P.P. with Helma Ward & Kirk Wachendorf *Voices of a Thousand People*; The Makah are the Nuu'Chah'Nulth band located in Washington State, and, therefore, affected by American policy rather than Canadian policy.

<sup>509</sup> See Thomas King, *The Truth about Stories*, Chapter 3 'Let Me Entertain You'; King talks about E. Pauline Johnson and the type of entertainment of the day, 'playing Indian'; Philip J. Deloria (1999) *Playing Indian*, Yale University Press.

<sup>510</sup> Also known as World's Columbian Exposition held to celebrate 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the New World.

<sup>511</sup> Huhndorf, S. (2001) *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination*, Cornell University Press: considered a major contribution to debates on authenticity and identity; see also Deloria, P.J. *Playing Indians*.

<sup>512</sup> Thrush, Coll (2007) *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place*, Weyerhaeuser Environmental Books, University of Washington Press, Seattle: p.69.

Others also represented the 'Indian'. According to humourist Stephen Leacock, writing during the early years of the First World War, 'Canadian history began with the arrivals of the Europeans' as previously the land had been inhabited 'by a few Indians mired in a state of primitive barbarism' in a vast empty land.<sup>513</sup> He believed, like many others at that time, Aboriginal people represented an early stage in the evolution of civilisation, a dismissive attitude he never lost. Not all thought as Leacock did. As a collector of stories and artefacts of the northwest, Marius Barbeau respected Aboriginal culture but he did agree with Leacock in one respect, the 'Indians were doomed' to disappear.<sup>514</sup> His colleague and friend, anthropologist Diamond Jenness, sums up the findings of his field-work, believing:

... the contact experience was totally negative for almost all native groups in Canada: disease, alcohol, increased warfare, depletion of game resources, alien religious beliefs.<sup>515</sup>

Jenness identified other reasons: neglect, destruction of their traditional cultures, inability to adapt to the new white way of living. His final conclusion: all tribes would disappear confirming what so many other people were saying at this time, 'contact was a curse, a sentence of death.'<sup>516</sup>

## Sapir and Language

Between 1910 and 1923, anthropologist and linguist Edward Sapir collected extensive information on the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, conducting fieldwork in Tseshaht where he interviewed many Nuu'Chah'Nulth elders. As a graduate working with anthropologist Franz Boas, Sapir had recognised the urgency to record endangered Aboriginal languages before they were lost forever. Although he made only two extensive field trips to Vancouver Island, his field notes, observations and face paintings are detailed and worthy of close scrutiny. On his second trip between 1913 and 1914, Sapir worked with a young Nuu'Chah'Nulth man, Alexander Thomas. On his return from residential school, Alex Thomas watched Sapir recording information and stories. Now nineteen years old, Thomas was trained by Sapir to gather information, in particular the stories from his grandfather, Sa:ya:ch'apis, developing the skills to listen, to

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<sup>513</sup> Francis, D. *The Imaginary Indian*: p.54; Leacock, S. (1941) *Canada, The Foundations of the Future*, The House of Seagram, Montreal: p.19.

<sup>514</sup> Francis, D. *The Imaginary Indian*: p.55; Barbeau, M. (1931) *Our Indians – Their Disappearance*, Queen's Quarterly: pp695-707; Marius Barbeau, an ethnologist with the Museum of Man in Ottawa, was an authority on totem poles.

<sup>515</sup> Francis, D. *The Imaginary Indian*: p.56; Jenness, D. & Jenness, S. E. (2008) *Through Darkening Spectacles: Memoirs of Diamond Jenness*, Mercury Series, History Paper 55, Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation, Quebec.

<sup>516</sup> Francis, D. *The Imaginary Indian*: p.57.



know, understand and use phonetic writing, to record his grandfather's advice and knowledge about Nuu'Chah'Nulth culture, traditions and more importantly, the language.<sup>517</sup>

Alex Thomas was born around 1894 near Port Alberni: he was a fisherman, trapper, longshoreman, logger, Tseshaht politician, and the grandson of Sapir's principal source of knowledge, narrator and translator of Nuu'Chah'Nulth stories, Tom Sa:ya:ch'apis.<sup>518</sup> In the process of recording Sapir's notes, Thomas became a professional First Nation ethnographer and linguist, responsible for sending the 'Sapir-Thomas Nootka Texts' to Ottawa: these ultimately formed the excellent ethnographic series written and presented from an Aboriginal point of view.<sup>519</sup> Sapir wanted these stories and notes translated as near to the original as possible, making every attempt 'to write the stories and present the ethnographic material he gathered in a manner ... true to the way they were told to him.'<sup>520</sup> So impressed with his work, Sapir allowed Thomas to continue recording his notes while he returned to Ottawa. As a result, these first person accounts were translated almost word for word from Nuu'Chah'Nulth to English, staying true to their original form and in keeping with the Nuu'Chah'Nulth way of telling a story.<sup>521</sup> The stories are informative, humorous, and full of the rich details of Nuu'Chah'Nulth political, social, and spiritual life. Sapir believed the people recounting these tales to 'adequately represent Nootka culture as a whole; and Tom, in particular, was known to be an inexhaustible mine of native lore.'<sup>522</sup>

The Nootka Tales are short, entertaining tales with messages told through the eyes and thoughts of animals, wolves and ravens, often referring to women's work, skills and roles

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<sup>517</sup> Sapir taught Alex Thomas the Boasian notation system so he could take over Sapir's work recording and translating the data for Sapir.

<sup>518</sup> Chief Tom Sa:ya:ch'apis, born in 1842, was blind and elderly when first interviewed in 1910 but his memory was clear. His experiences of childhood, seasonal travelling to gather resources, culture, traditions, giving potlatches, trading etc. are representative of his era; much of today's understanding of Nuu'Chah'Nulth past rests on the information he gave to Sapir and Alex Thomas his grandson.

<sup>519</sup> In the 1930s Thomas worked at Yale University helping linguist Sapir and Morris Swadesh with the publication of the book *Nootka Texts*. In the 1960s he joined anthropologist Eugene Arima in Ottawa to compose a dictionary of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth language, a language now spoken and understood by very few although there is great interest now from the younger generations to learn the language. Thomas died in 1968.

<sup>520</sup> Cote, C. *Spirits of our Whaling Ancestors* p.10, p.82; Hoover, Alan L. *Nuu'Chah'Nulth Voices*.

<sup>521</sup> Arima, E., Kammler, H., Klokeid, T. & Robinson, Katherine (Eds.) (2009) *Family Origin Histories: The Whaling Indians; West Coast Legends and Stories, Part 11 of the Sapir-Thomas Nootka Texts*, told by Tyee Bob, Sa:ya:ch'apis, William. Qwishanishim, Lo:tisim, Tayi:?a and Chief Louie Nookmiis; Prepared by Edward Sapir, Morris Swadesh, Hamilton George, Alexander Thomas, Frank Williams, Kate Fraser and John Thomas, published by the Canadian Museum of Civilisation: both Tseshaht and English versions included in the published texts allowing cultural nuances to remain.

<sup>522</sup> Sapir, Edward & Swadesh, Morris (1939) *Nootka Texts: Tales and Ethnological Narratives with Grammatical Notes and Lexicon Materials*, Linguistic Society of America, Yale University, introduction, p9; part of the William Dwight Whitney Linguistic series from notes written in 1910 and 1913/14; sources for the texts Tom Sa:ya:ch'apis, the chief informant, Hamilton George, Frank Williams, Douglas Thomas, Captain Bill (William), Peter Kishkish and Bid Fred.

in the community. Much is made of ceremonial wailing in the story of *The Raven and his Wife*, tale number eight,<sup>523</sup> whilst tale number ten tells of the woman who made canoe mats, told through the voice of the 'Transformer', a mythical animal.<sup>524</sup> A mother is digging for clams at the beach in tale number twelve which continues by describing her fishing skills: 'she made a rope and hook line out of her hair which was long.'<sup>525</sup> Tale number thirteen, 'The Man who Bought his Wife back from the Dead', explains the process of cutting up and skinning a young seal, the preparation and washing of the skin in the sea by women.<sup>526</sup> The diligence of Sapir and his informants provides substantial evidence of women's work in the early twentieth century and one hundred years later, many of these tales are explored through the voices of the women when explaining rituals within Nu'u'Chah'Nulth society today.

What are of great interest in Sapir's tales are references to ritual bathing, cleansing, and prayer, activities happening four days before ceremonies and still occurring today. The tales link to the interviews where women mention the importance of being cleansed before a ceremony: 'On the morning of the ceremony my daughter and I went out to bathe and to talk to the creator and to prepare ourselves for that day.'<sup>527</sup> Louise adds:

[my grandmother] was always going for a bathe. I can remember going for a bathe with her in the water, in the creek, to cleanse herself. She prayed and she taught me all that ... so when I'm really down I'll find somewhere to bathe where I can be quiet.<sup>528</sup>

These rituals ensure long life and freedom from disease and are still important today.

Sapir had eight, male informants, who he believed 'adequately represent Nootka culture as a whole,'<sup>529</sup> raising the question as to why no women were used as informants especially as they were often the keepers of knowledge and story-tellers with a great deal of information to share with Sapir. In the spirit of the age, maybe it did not occur to Sapir to use women as a source for information. This echoes the pivotal work of anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski who published 'Argonauts of the Western Pacific', a book documenting the trading practices of the Trobriand people.<sup>530</sup> Years later Annette Weiner travelled to the same islands

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<sup>523</sup> Sapir & Swadesh, *Nootka Texts*: p.42-43, Tale Number 8; reference is made to ceremonial wailing.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid., p.45, Tale Number 10.

<sup>525</sup> Ibid., p.57; Tale Number 12.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid., p.63-67, Tale Number 13.

<sup>527</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.12 of transcript; Eileen describes the preparations for a ceremonial feast for her late brother.

<sup>528</sup> Interview with Louise, 30<sup>th</sup> April 2010: p.1 of transcript; in the Nootka Tales, Numbers 13 and 22, and Tale Number 22, the Origin of the Wolf Ritual, discuss the four days of bathing rituals and prayer to gain long life and freedom from disease.

<sup>529</sup> Sapir & Swadesh *Nootka Texts*: Introduction, p.9.

<sup>530</sup> Malinowski, B. (1922) *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An account of native enterprise and adventures in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London

and discovered that because Malinowski had never talked to the women, he had missed an entire portion of cultural trade, casting doubts on his conclusions.<sup>531</sup>

While Chief Sa:ya:ch'apis was Sapir's principal source on Nuu'Chah'Nulth culture and language, as he 'was known to be an inexhaustible mine of native lore,'<sup>532</sup> it was Douglas Thomas, his son who knew and understood the meanings of the varied face paintings, depicting rituals and ceremonies. The designs themselves are simplistic, clearly identifying the variances between the different ceremonies; it is the explanations in the *Nootka Tales*, the detailed economic and natural history information attached to each design that provides the knowledge and understanding of what each shape symbolised. These amazing face paintings illustrate the ritual costumes, colours and symbolic representation of economic life – fishing, hunting/gathering – providing for the researcher evidence of women's role in Nuu'Chah'Nulth society: for example, woman painted for butter-clam digging ritual; woman painted for purple sea-urchin harvesting ritual; woman painted for *kwan'is* (wild onion) digging ritual; woman painted for dancing for joy.<sup>533</sup> The designs concern the physical and spiritual preparation to be successful, *?o:simch*, the essential rituals undergone before any ceremony, any life activity takes place. In essence, they epitomise Nuu'Chah'Nulth life practice. The Nuu'Chah'Nulth women talked about a few of those ceremonies that were either personal to their lives or ceremonies with which they were familiar: eating raw sea urchins to cleanse themselves, for equilibrium and calming; wild onion and clam digging rituals; salmonberry picking ritual; preparation of cedar bark peeling for weaving; using small smoking pine branches for calming or preparing oneself for a new venture. The face painting is rarely carried out now but the ceremonies are very much in evidence.<sup>534</sup>

## The Potlatch

Sa:ya:ch'apis, 'a blind old man, unfailingly good-humoured and courteous, steeped in the Aboriginal past and thoroughly innocent of English,'<sup>535</sup> was brought up understanding the importance of *?o:simch*, the ritual cleansing protocol, spiritual preparation, and praying prior

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<sup>531</sup> The given anthropological methodology of the day focused on questioning men as their sources of information rather than women; Annette Barbara Cohen Weiner, 1933-1997.

<http://anthropology.usf.edu/women/weiner/FinalWeiner.htm>.

<sup>532</sup> Sapir & Swadesh *Nootka Texts*: introduction, p.9.

<sup>533</sup> Thomas, Douglas 'Face Paintings from the Sapir Collection' in Hoover, Alan L. (Ed.) *Nuu'Chah'Nulth Voices*; pp172-200.

<sup>534</sup> I was present at the sea-urchin, and pine branch waving rituals. The sea-urchin custom is quite common amongst women who are going through the healing process, to cleanse themselves from the effects of residential schooling and other trauma; waving pine branches gently around promises a calm atmosphere, to be at peace with yourself and others. Interviews with Anne Robinson and Louise

<sup>535</sup> Sapir & Swadesh *Nootka Texts*: p.9.

to potlatches, ceremonies, and other social practices.<sup>536</sup> In the 1890s, Sa:ya:ch'apis gives many and varied potlatches, including those to honour planting potatoes, his menstruating daughter, her coming of age, puberty. He was considered to be a wealthy man and descriptions of his potlatches illustrate that wealth. In his communications with Sapir he says: "I bought twenty bales, eighty boxes of biscuits, and ten barrels of sugar at ten dollars each. I spent one hundred dollars for sugar."<sup>537</sup>

Blankets, a very common gift to distribute at a potlatch, cost one and a half dollars each. Goods were collected from different parts of Nuu'Chah'Nulth territory including Clayoquot, Ucluelet, Makah as well as Saanich, Cowichan, Nanaimo and Comox. Potlatches, ceremonies and topatis were so numerous with gifts being distributed all over the area that it became very difficult for chiefs to show anything new to invited guests. Tom said: "I let them consume eight hundred dollars and I [still] had [something] left over in the house. I gave a potlatch gift of ten sacks of flour to each chief; I distributed wealth."<sup>538</sup>

Ceremonies and celebrations are integral to Nuu'Chah'Nulth life, so banning the potlatch in 1884 due to pressure from missionaries could have had potentially disastrous results.<sup>539</sup> The potlatch perpetuated Nuu'Chah'Nulth social organisation, validating status and hereditary privilege acquired at birth so it was essential the process continued. It was a time when hereditary leaders hosted feasts for others, the main purpose of which is the re-distribution or reciprocity of wealth procured by families. Protocol differed between various Nuu'Chah'Nulth bands but usually a potlatch involved a feast with music, dance, story-telling, entertainment and spiritual elements, a winter pastime. Potlatches were, and still are, a very necessary and integral part of Nuu'Chah'Nulth life.

The Nuu'Chah'Nulth and other isolated coastal communities devised countless ingenious ways in continuing their ceremonies, either holding them in secret locations, finding innovative ways to commemorate important times in a person's life, or even reducing the size of the ceremony: 'we had feasts but ... it was quietly underground ... they continued because

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<sup>536</sup> The latter section of the Nootka Tales, dictated by Sa:ya:ch'apis in 1914 and texts 33-39, constitute an autobiographical account of his ceremonial activities and marriage.

<sup>537</sup> Sapir & Swadesh, *Nootka Texts*: p.145; further detail about Sa:ya:ch'apis in Cote, C. *Spirits of our Whaling Ancestors*: p.85-89.

<sup>538</sup> Sapir & Swadesh, *Nootka Texts*: p.175.

<sup>539</sup> The potlatch – a gift-giving, gift-sharing ceremony or festival, the primary economic system; the word potlatch comes from Chinook trade language and derived from the Nuu'Chah'Nulth word '*pachitle*' meaning 'to give away' or 'a gift'; a potlatch usually involves a feast with music, dance and songs; section 114 of the Indian Act prohibited 'any Indian festival, dance or other ceremony of which the giving away or paying or giving back of money goods or articles of any sort forms a part, or is a feature of' in Bracken, C. (1997) *The Potlatch Papers* University of Chicago Press; p.166; see also Cote, C. *Spirits of our Whaling Ancestors*.

we were so isolated ... we didn't really have police or DIA bothering us.'<sup>540</sup> Indian agents were told the people were going fishing so wrapping gifts in Christmas paper proved to be an ingenious way of disguising the presents.<sup>541</sup> It was an opportunity 'to be together, to do things, to sing and dance, entertain each other. People had different talents, we would all go.'<sup>542</sup>

Family, that's so important in the winter months, the fall onwards, September and October, that's when the potlatches happened, when the chiefs did their business and ... People travelled to some other Reserve. ... Even today even though we are in the twenty-first century if there are any big dos it'll happen September or October. Our social season is the fall.<sup>543</sup>

In 1904, A.W. Neill's report<sup>544</sup> alerted readers the word 'potlatch' should be interpreted with caution since its references ranged from 'what a white man might call an invitation to dinner up to a frenzied carousal leaving the hosts absolutely penniless.'<sup>545</sup> Although Neill was convinced of the necessity of banning the potlatch, believing it to be a waste of time as well as money, he recognised, since the settlers had arrived, potlatches were less frenzied. Nonetheless, he believed the excesses of the potlatch should be curtailed. Sproat, in his 'Scenes of Savage Life', mentions potlatches although he does not name them as such; he affirms the Tseshaht, after accumulating personal possessions and property, periodically distributed these gifts amongst invited guests on the understanding it will be returned at a later date, a reciprocal arrangement.<sup>546</sup> Anthropologist Franz Boas asserted the potlatch was a system of public and economic record-keeping maintained through the ceremonial distribution of food and material goods, such as blankets. Sa:ya:ch'apis accumulated such a large store of blankets, to be given away at one of his elaborate potlatches, they reached through the roof of his longhouse causing it to collapse.<sup>547</sup>

Boas recognised potlatches celebrated important events and rites-of-passage, marking the end of a complicated series of preparations. It would be easy to conclude from his writings the privileges associated with ceremonies belonged exclusively to men and boys since Boas tends to obscure the roles of women and girls in ceremonies. Not only are women intricately

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<sup>540</sup> Interview with Genevieve, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010: p.6 transcript; DIA - Department of Indian Affairs.

<sup>541</sup> Alfred, Agnes (2004) *Paddling to Where I Stand* UBC Press, Vancouver; pp.123-124: Agnes Alfred, a Kwakwaka'wakw elder, was born in 1890 and lived at the northern end of Vancouver Island. The tradition of disguising their gifts as Christmas gifts was not unusual as Colson describes a similar pattern.

<sup>542</sup> Interview with Ina and Charlotte, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.8 of transcript; fishing, hunting/gathering, preparation of excess food for winter months took place during the summer; ceremonies include: birth, first hair-cutting, belly-button, coming-of-age/rites-of-passage, naming, weddings, honouring the dead.

<sup>543</sup> Interview with Evelyn Corfield, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.11 of transcript.

<sup>544</sup> Indian Agent, A.W.Neill's West Coast Agency Report, 1904, accessed in the Archives in the Royal British Columbia Museum in May 2012 .

<sup>545</sup> Bracken, C. *The Potlatch Papers*: pp168-169, curtailing excesses of potlatch.

<sup>546</sup> Sproat, G. M. *Scenes and Studies of Savage Life*: pp.79-80.

<sup>547</sup> Other accounts say the floor collapsed; suffice to say Sa:ya:ch'apis had accumulated many blankets.

involved in all potlatch preparations, they also hold key roles in the ceremony itself.<sup>548</sup> Boas omits any references to the trading of European goods at potlatches in his accounts, gifts such as sewing machines. As Boas only recorded items he thought were traditional gifts, blankets and furs, his notes about potlatches provide only a limited indication of what was actually traded. Boas maintained, although acquisition of wealth was important, the ability to hold a great potlatch, where wealth and gifts could be given away or re-distributed, was more admirable, and puberty potlatches were the most important family celebration, requiring the presence of guests as witnesses, an essential element in maintaining status. Girl's puberty rites play an important role in these social events, as this is a special time in a young girl's life, a time when she is honoured and recognised as a woman. These social gatherings provide a fitting occasion for women's belief in their sense of self-worth, an expression of their importance in the community so the banning of the potlatch effectively destabilised this 'mutually beneficial arrangement.'<sup>549</sup> In the mid-1880s, Chief Sa:ya:ch'apis, who had been preparing for his daughter's coming-of-age potlatch for many months, discovered to his dismay many people had declined his invitation to attend giving the reason of going to the hop fields: 'you are too late, we are going to the hop fields. ... We might be too late for the hops.'<sup>550</sup> This refusal was a serious slight for Sa:ya:ch'apis. Fortunately his friend, Chief Shonhin, issued invitations to his neighbours and the potlatch took place. The conflict between securing wages to feed your family and hereditary gatherings was not an unusual occurrence at this time, so it gradually became common practice to incorporate gatherings into migrant employment opportunities, turning a potential economic threat into an asset.

Sapir was one of a growing number of anthropologists who warned the Canadian government and officials of the hardships being experienced by the coastal people if they were not allowed to practice their potlatch traditions. Having spent time living amongst the people and studying their language, Sapir was very aware how the social and economic significance of potlatch redistribution functions were misunderstood by non-native people. Until the beginning of World War One, the potlatch ban was enforced sporadically. However, in 1914 the Indian Act was amended to strengthen anti-potlatch law by expanding the definition of prohibited tribal activities. In fact, the definition became so broad it applied to almost everything and, consequently, became easier to enforce. The 1920s saw an increase in

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<sup>548</sup> Bracken, C. *The Potlatch Papers*: pp142-143.

<sup>549</sup> Cote, C. *Spirits of our Whaling Ancestors*: p.56.

<sup>550</sup> Raibmon, Paige (2005) *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the late-nineteenth-century Northwest Coast*, Duke University Press, Durham; p104: detail of historical occurrence in Sapir & Swadesh *Nootka Texts*: pp149-151.

'potlatch arrests, charges, persecutions, convictions, and imprisonment in British Columbia.'<sup>551</sup> The anti-potlatch law undermined everything as the potlatch, an essential element of Nuu'Chah'Nulth culture, allowed hereditary leaders or chiefs to host feasts for whole communities, to share excess food and goods with others less fortunate, an opportunity for a chief to display wealth. The main purpose of a potlatch could be said to be the re-distribution of wealth, a time of giving, to ensure everyone had something. Nothing was wasted as surplus food was divided between those less fortunate, an example of social insurance where food could be distributed to neighbouring villages when resources were low, an action that would be reciprocated in times of need.<sup>552</sup>

In his travels around Nuu'Chah'Nulth lands in the 1880s, Indian Agent Guillod<sup>553</sup> found the potlatch to be a bonding process amongst the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, offering a time where people came together, celebrating with songs, stories and dances. He noticed, although the people were amenable to relinquishing some of their customs, such as long houses, they would not renounce the potlatch. Chief Maquinna<sup>554</sup> explained to Guillod the important economic, spiritual and social significance of potlatches, a deep-rooted custom that was part of their whole being, their thoughts and feelings, a connection to their ancestors. It was the time whole communities benefitted: the giving away of food and goods, ensuring the care of the elderly, the infirm and those unable to work. The potlatch took care of everyone. This system of distribution and reciprocation maintained kinship ties and marriages, reinforcing bonds and obligations throughout the territory.

However, there was a negative aspect to holding potlatches in secret as it became increasingly difficult for the chief or *haw'iih* to assert their status in maintaining their social standing in the distribution of goods. The changes in potlatch traditions caused a re-organising of social structures within communities. Potlatches became shorter, a necessary outcome to ensure secrecy, changing into abridged versions, from large public community events into small family gatherings, less elaborate and less dramatic. Residential schooling and the number of years children spent away from home also had an adverse effect, as many of the ceremonies celebrating important moments in life occurred whilst children were absent from

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<sup>551</sup> Cote, C. *Spirits of our Whaling Ancestors*: p.55; see also Drucker, P. & Heizer, R. (1967) *to make my name good: A Re-examination of the Southern Kwakiutl Potlatch*, University of California Press, Berkeley & Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>552</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inalienable-possessions>.

<sup>553</sup> Harry Guillod, Indian Agent, 1838-1906; he spent time travelling through Nuu'Chah'Nulth lands informing people of the new potlatch laws; he was the first Indian Agent for the West Coast Agency, 1881; Before Guillod the only government report was written by Gilbert Sproat; accessed in the Provincial Archives in Victoria, BC; May 2012.

<sup>554</sup> A different Chief Maquinna from the one who had met Cook; the name is passed down through the generations; I met the current Chief Maquinna in 2010.

the communities. Increased instances of tuberculosis and, in the early days, the influence of missionaries, all affected the duration of a potlatch. However, despite its shortened length, the core ideal of any potlatch, the opportunity for families and communities to gather together, has remained.

## Part Two: Reality

By the early twentieth century, colonial ideas formed people's perceptions of authenticity or, in Paige Raibmon's definition: 'traits that colonisers assumed were authentic or colonially defined notions of authenticity,'<sup>555</sup> a fluctuating set of ideas and thoughts. Images of the vanishing Indian challenged notions of colonialism and capitalism as the colonisers' imagined and Aboriginal people shaped and used these ideas for their benefit, both becoming collaborators in the process of authenticity. By using the example of the migrant hop-pickers it is possible to explore these thoughts further.

### Hop-picking

The Nuu'Chah'Nulth had lost the means and opportunity to labour for their own survival but the people could provide waged-labour for a capitalist society within the hop and berry-picking farming communities of northern Washington around Puget Sound. Why did the Nuu'Chah'Nulth and other First Nations in the Northwest Pacific become a part of this economic transformation? The simple answer is they had no choice as, with restricted lands and fishing grounds, traditional livelihoods were lost: sealing restrictions, combined with a collapse in the whale-oil market and the halibut industry at the end of the nineteenth century, initiated a period of prolonged economic hardship for the Nuu'Chah'Nulth. Involvement in the waged-economy gave women power to interact with the colonised as effective participants, and the transition from subsistence and trade economy to a regional market economy led to alternative wage opportunities. Hop-picking, berry-picking and cannery work brought political and cultural gains and, more importantly, economic advantages in the form of earned income. There were benefits for the colonisers as well: the image of the vanishing or assimilating 'Indian' could be seen as authentic as tourists and investors came to see the people labouring in the hop fields, and these images publicised the attractions of the area – good fertile ground and a cheap labour force. Nuu'Chah'Nulth women were not new to waged work as they had been an integral part of the maritime fur-trade a century earlier. Through the hop-picking industry women found innovative ways to earn status, wealth and an income.

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<sup>555</sup> Raibmon, P. *Authentic Indians*, p.212.



While traditional values and attitudes did not restrict women's capacity and ability to work in alternative settings when opportunities arose, within the developing colonial environment there was limited economic viability and opportunity for traditional pursuits. Nuu'Chah'Nulth women were effective workers with different work attitudes owing to their value system. They did not consider work as a virtue or as a source of personal prestige like many white settlers but rather as a way of meeting need within an adapting and changing traditional economic framework. Consider the following. The Nuu'Chah'Nulth had already been involved in the maritime fur-trade for nearly eighty years, and many features of their traditional societies, trading methods, and economic knowledge had evolved during that time. They were producers of commodities as the women sold their own hand-crafted goods: basketry, weaving, and beading - to traders and tourists,<sup>556</sup> so employment on hop and berry-picking farms provided a much needed income for Nuu'Chah'Nulth women and their families. Although the annual hop migrations to Puget Sound suggest the romanticised language of the 'authentic Indian', there is a great deal of historical accuracy in these annual pilgrimages; more importantly, the annual migration provided the means to augment income. Wages were a key motivation for travelling to the hop and berry fields but the whole process fitted within the wider Nuu'Chah'Nulth agenda and worldview. Profitability for Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, the importance of socialisation, the exchanging of ideas, skills, goods and information, forging new links while maintaining and reaffirming old ones, strengthening the interconnectedness between women, between families, an income earned from sight-seeing excursions by camera-happy whites and selling their own hand-crafted goods, were all features of late nineteenth century hop migrations.<sup>557</sup> Like commercial berry-picking, hop-picking became a rewarding part of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women's lives as every year during August, at the close of the salmon canning season, extended family groups of women, children, and elders, often with their own trade goods, migrated to the hop fields of Puget Sound.<sup>558</sup> It was women who decided where a family would pick, the journey familiar to many Nuu'Chah'Nulth families who annually travelled south by canoe to Puget Sound. The journey afforded an array of opportunities to earn money, trade and sell their goods. Maybe just as important people travelled south for reasons unrelated to the white economy – gatherings and ceremonies with friends and family. When migrant workers travelled they took with them their practices, culture, traditions, and priorities.

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<sup>556</sup> Nuu'Chah'Nulth women sold their baskets and other goods along the roadside in Seattle, and the docks in Port Alberni; evidenced in photographs in the Royal British Columbia Museum, April 2012.

<sup>557</sup> The hop fields could be considered fertile ground for studying Nuu'Chah'Nulth women's waged economies and their culture in the late nineteenth century.

<sup>558</sup> The majority of the people picking berries and hops for a waged income were women.

By the end of the nineteenth century migrant labour had evolved into an integral component of traditional Nuu'Chah'Nulth culture.<sup>559</sup> The economic opportunities from hop-picking, domestic service and other waged situations gave women income countering the devastating social effects of epidemic disease, Reserve living, the reduction of traditional lands for the 'hunter/ gatherer' lifestyle, and poor salmon harvests.<sup>560</sup> Initially, the hop industry appears to be a straight forward example of modern capitalist wage labour but is, in fact, clearly bound up with Nuu'Chah'Nulth traditions and thinking. The women had their own agendas as to why these harvest journeys were undertaken, why this yearly migration became so important, but in the first instance hop picking was primarily a labour-intensive economic activity so necessary for the survival of their society, a very important boost to their economy. On the other hand, the hop harvest could be a risky enterprise, the market highly speculative. The boom/bust pattern of growing and harvesting can be aptly compared with the gold rushes earlier in the nineteenth century.

It was a lottery as to how much money could be made: economic fluctuations depended on the harvest and a good harvest tended to compensate any monetary shortfalls. Competition for this hard work was intense with many Aboriginal migrant workers competing with local people for limited job opportunities. Filling a single box kept an experienced woman-picker in the field from sunrise to sundown. Families could fill two to three boxes a day if they worked collectively, although the inexperienced struggled to fill even one box in a day. Another important factor was timing: when to leave the hop fields to return to their homes as leaving too early could result in calamity as in the case of the Kyuquot in 1885.<sup>561</sup> Some returned early because farmers were only paying 75 cents per box instead of the usual dollar. As the price of hops fell still further, the remaining women, children and elder, facing starvation, were only able to avert 'disaster by finding a 'big seam' of clams'<sup>562</sup> in Puget Sound which they were able to sell for a profit in Seattle. With the proceeds, the women returned home to host a huge potlatch.<sup>563</sup> The Kyuquot had been richly compensated for loss of wages: others were not so lucky returning home with nothing to show for their time.

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<sup>559</sup> Income from the colonial economy had implications as it affected the circulation of wealth and prestige within families. Following productive harvests non-elites had access to the wealth necessary for potlatches. The devastating demographic transformation of population decline due to epidemic diseases and inter-tribal warfare also affected the spread of wealth.

<sup>560</sup> Domestic service in Victoria and Seattle.

<sup>561</sup> Kyuquot is situated on the west coast of Vancouver Island.

<sup>562</sup> Raibmon, P. *Authentic Indians*, p.99.

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*, p.99: At the potlatch the people distributed 180 blankets, 5 canoes, ten iron pots, eight guns, 12 trunks and five dollars in cash.

In this instance, Indian agents were quick to stress it was the fault of the Kyuquot for relying on a single and erratic source of income, but this was not the case as by the time the Kyuquot hop pickers arrived in Puget Sound other forms of income – sealing, procuring dogfish oil and salmon canning – had already failed. Having taken a united stand against the drop in the market price of seals skins earlier in the year,<sup>564</sup> it had been formally agreed at the winter feasts not to go sealing but instead to focus on harvesting herring roe and rendering dogfish oil. However, they were to be thwarted once again as the price of dogfish oil was down, and to compound the problem even further there were limited work opportunities and lower wages at the canneries than usual: seasonal labour in the hop fields had been the last resort.

As the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, like other First Nation groups in British Columbia, attempted to weather the economic pressures imposed on them, the provincial government failed to appreciate the strong work-ethic and the seasonal movements of the people themselves. This work ethic was part of their upbringing, the Nuu'Chah'Nulth way of life as, even on the journey home from the hop fields, women took every opportunity to gather winter provisions, picking wild salal berries and apples, collect the reeds and grasses necessary for weaving and basket making. An Elder, Kathy Robinson, explains the different berries picked on her travels.

We picked all kinds of berries; red huckleberries, shiny huckleberries, blue powdered berries, we picked them all up the mountains. Then we would bring them home, we would have baskets of them; clean all the stems out, wash them then roll them, smash them ... and then leave them in the sun to dry for the summer, then you pack them away. Then in the winter, you put them in cold water and you have berries again.<sup>565</sup> Transition to the summer's intensive food gathering period often began with herring runs followed by halibut and salmon fishing. Clams, berries, cedar roots, bark and plank were other important resources collected, preserved, and stored for later use by the women. These cycles were augmented by income-earning opportunities, selling crafted goods to tourists, and hop-picking. The hop and berry picking rituals provided opportunities to meet family members and friends, talk, exchange family news, to be introduced to new members of the family either through birth or marriage, to discover innovative and fresh ideas and designs for weaving and knitting, to learn new and additional skills, to tell stories, and to add to and enrich family histories in the telling of their stories. For women, the social element is as important as the economic one as 'it was like a holiday.'<sup>566</sup>

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<sup>564</sup> Believed to be 1885; Department of Indian Affairs (DIA), Indian Agent Reports: AR 1886 & SP1887, viewed in the archives at the Royal BC Museum, Victoria, April 2012.

<sup>565</sup> Notes from interviews; quote from interview with Kathy Robinson, May 2009: p.8 of transcript.

<sup>566</sup> Interview with Lena Jumbo, May 2010, Ahousaht: p.5 of transcript.

[It] was mostly women and children and families sometimes husbands ... if they [the men] were fishermen they stayed at home to fish because fishing time is in the summer ... so it would be just the elderly men.<sup>567</sup>

The migratory patterns created large gatherings of Aboriginal people from different bands.

There was interconnectedness between the family members of women, amongst women from diverse bands across the region.

There was something that connects [you] to all those generations before.<sup>568</sup>

They weren't only from this area; there are fourteen bands here and we'd all go from Nanaimo, from Duncan, from Salish, Saanich; they were all there.<sup>569</sup>

The organised annual hop picking happening was only one of several migrant work opportunities. Kathy explained the hop-picking ritual in the 1930s when she was about six years old.

In the summer time they took us. We had one they called the Boss and she would hire everybody, then they would send the money for the fare and for expenses ... the hiring happened when we were kids and then they started hiring Japanese, then we started having strawberries, raspberries, cherries, hops, everything.<sup>570</sup>

As others began to encroach into the First Nation hop picking domain, alternate sources of income needed to be generated to supplement seasonal casual work. The necessity of augmenting economic diversity and income was provided by the waged-income of berry picking, and this brief reference also alerts us to information concerning this important economic activity:

I went berry picking in the States. We went with Aunty who paid the travel fees. We picked strawberries in the strawberry fields.<sup>571</sup>

It is difficult to ascertain whether or not this Aunty was a relative or a close personal friend or just an acquaintance who had agreed to pay the travel costs, but money was available for travel to the States for work, and many extended families travelled by canoe to the Puget Sound for this paid venture.

Although berry-picking was a fundamental part of their lives, Nuu'Chah'Nulth women also used the time away from their lands to collect berries as an economic activity: 'There was hop-picking and there were also different kinds of berry-picking but that didn't come till a lot later when the settlers were here.'<sup>572</sup> It appears to have been a thriving and vibrant time, a

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<sup>567</sup> Kathy Robinson: p.8 of transcript.

<sup>568</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, May 2009: p.6 of transcript.

<sup>569</sup> Interview with Kathy Robinson, May 2009: p.8 of transcript: I interviewed Kathy at her home on the reserve, Port Alberni.

<sup>570</sup> Ibid: p.7 of transcript.

<sup>571</sup> Interview with Brenda, April 2010, in the community hall in Gold River: p.2 of transcript.

<sup>572</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009 in Port Alberni: p.20 of transcript.

time to catch up on family news, to make new friends, an important social event as well as being an economic benefit to the people.

I remember my aunt going to Washington State to pick berries, other women as well. It was how a lot of women met. It would have been at the berry picking down in Washington State, whatever was in season, you were following the berries.<sup>573</sup> By the 1880s, the Puget Sound hop-picking industry was reaching international prominence. The 1880 census<sup>574</sup> shows 'Indians' coming in groups to Seattle with women listed as 'keeping camp'<sup>575</sup> as hop-picking was predominantly a female activity. Many of the canoes were paddled by Nuu'Chah'Nulth women bringing 'oolalies (berries) and clams and mallard ducks'<sup>576</sup> for sale, allowing the people to maintain their connections to the places and resources reflecting earlier patterns of existence; a meeting of the past and the present. In 1884, at the end of a hop-picking season, women and families continued through the autumn harvesting other crops, finally returning home with their canoes laden with goods: flour, potatoes, and sugar. The women bought goods and foodstuffs with their earned income to sustain the communities through the winter, and materials to give away at winter potlatches; the manufactured goods, bought with their wages, were gradually subsumed into traditional Nuu'Chah'Nulth lifestyles.<sup>577</sup> Income from economic ventures had another implication as the money earned affected the circulation of wealth in families.

### Other Economic Opportunities

However, not all Nuu'Chah'Nulth women returned to their homelands on the west coast; many stayed in Seattle and its neighbourhoods, securing good positions as domestic servants with Seattle burghers and merchants as well as seasonal work with local horticultural businesses. The women continued to be involved in hop and berry-picking, and growing, for sale, vegetables, herbs and flowers on small allotments. Their earnings were spent in Seattle. These women quickly established positive reputations for shrewdness in their trading habits, as sharp traders reflecting the trading skills from earlier times.<sup>578</sup> Despite the reserves often being emptied of women at this time of the year, particularly on the nearby Makah Reserves, their traditions were not eroded but were, in fact, strengthened as the interconnectedness between women, between bands flourished.

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<sup>573</sup> Interview with Evelyn Corfield in Port Alberni, May 9<sup>th</sup> 2009: p.8 of transcript.

<sup>574</sup> Census Returns, BC Portion, Black Series, Canada, B390 in BC Archives: evidenced April 2012.

<sup>575</sup> Thrush, C. *Native Seattle*: pp70-71; I have made an assumption these women were, in the main, Nuu'Chah'Nulth as travelling to Puget Sound for hop-picking was traditionally part of their culture.

<sup>576</sup> Ibid., p.70.

<sup>577</sup> Erikson, P.P. with Helma Ward & Kirk Wachendorf (2002) *Voices of a Thousand People: The Makah Cultural & Research Center*, University of Nebraska Press.

<sup>578</sup> Thrush, C. *Native Seattle*: pp107-108.

Several economic opportunities became available to women and young girls at the turn of the century that had not existed for women of earlier generations, who primarily dried and smoked fish, meat, and berries, landed fish from canoes, preserved and jarred, and wove hats and baskets. Despite increasing political controls on the people and fluctuating economic markets, Nuu'Chah'Nulth women continued to make important economic decisions for the well-being of their families, to travel widely, trading sweaters for bags of clothes and other goods, to earn waged-income as washer-women, being employed in the service economy involving hotel and domestic work, selling crafts, baskets and hats, and, in some instances, 'playing Indian' for the tourists.

It is necessary to remind ourselves these women were crossing an international boundary, an opportunist but also problematic time, working in the hop fields as well as part of the economic trade in the lucrative smuggling of dog-fish oil.<sup>579</sup> Hop-field migrations represented a short-term escape valve for the women, away from colonial obligations that curtailed gatherings and ceremonies. Large gatherings of women, children and elders congregated at strategic points across the border to share news, meet family, and take part in economic activities. As the potlatch ban imposed restrictions on cultural events and practice, the people used every opportunity to gather together and interrupting the journey to the hop-fields presented an ideal time for these meetings.<sup>580</sup> Off-reserve mobility was a crucial part of Nuu'Chah'Nulth life, a necessity for economic survival and social well-being.

## Canneries

From the 1870s onwards women's wage work in canneries became: 'modified versions of the traditional summer fishing encampments in which women's work in fish preservation merely shifted to preserving fish in canneries for wages.'<sup>581</sup> As the canning industry evolved, traditional subsistence fishing became progressively different as it became necessary to know how to secure employment in canneries whilst at the same time, continuing to use traditional fishing methods of weir and fish traps, drip and reef netting, jigging and spearing.

Nuu'Chah'Nulth women became accustomed to working within a more mechanised industry, so different from their traditional methods: women cleaned fish, filled cans, worked with machines alongside steam vats and boilers, near conveyors and transmission belts amid

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<sup>579</sup> Dog-fish oil was an important commercial product and source of income for the Nuu'Chah'Nulth since the 1850s; demand for the oil came from coastal sawmills that used large quantities to lubricate machinery.

<sup>580</sup> Colonialism and international boundaries had divided Aboriginal people into 'Canadian' Indians and 'American' Indians curtailing both personal freedom and cultural practice.

<sup>581</sup> Knight, Rolf (1978) *Indians at Work: An Informal History of Native Indian Labour in BC, 1858-1930*, New Star Books, Vancouver: p.11.

steam, pipes and foremen – the industrialisation of the resource frontier. Nuu'Chah'Nulth women worked on an early assembly-line basis, governed by the demands of line and factory whistles, working for wages on piece-work basis. They lived in shacks in cannery towns built around the plants, buying goods and food at the cannery store, the costs checked against their earnings, working as part of a very heterogeneous labour force. Canneries could be considered to be the vanguard of industrialisation, often not steady or permanent work but also not strategically different to non-native work habits. Lena explains:

I lived with my grandmother after my mother died; and I stayed with her until I was five. They used to go up north to fish and work in the cannery; and my older sister used to leave school to go up to work in the cannery.<sup>582</sup>

A pattern emerges, similar to hop-picking practices, the women travelling to where work was available.

Of course there were canneries later on that everyone worked at and again you went, I heard, of course I never worked at them. I heard the women went to the canneries at Ucluelet and then you went up the coast to work in so-and-so's cannery and different fish were canned which was quite interesting.<sup>583</sup>

Waged-labour was clearly very important to many, and seasonal work often provided a higher income than most traditional pursuits. More importantly, employers realised Nuu'Chah'Nulth women were hard working people, so often retained 'Indian' cannery workers over others.<sup>584</sup> In 1901 a cannery dealing with pilchards and herrings opened in Port Alberni employing large numbers of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women; and with the opening of a whaling station at Narrowgat Inlet in 1908, a regular freight coastal service, the SS Maquinna, in 1913, and numerous fish camps along the West coast, the Nuu'Chah'Nulth were drawn into the full-time market economy.<sup>585</sup>

Towards the end of the nineteenth century there was an upsurge in the production of commercial Indian handicrafts and art for curio and ethnographic trade: basketry produced for sale, weaving products and cottage industries that did not compete with commercially produced goods. It proved possible to rapidly transmit the skills and knowledge of small cottage industries, such as knitting and bead-work, to women new to these skills although

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<sup>582</sup> Interview with Lena Jumbo in Ahousaht, May 2010: p.4 of transcript; although it is difficult to judge the dates these actions occurred suffice to say she was in her mid-eighties so when talking about her grandmother I have estimated the times to be 1920s/1930s.

<sup>583</sup> Interview with Evelyn Corfield in Port Alberni, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.8 of transcript; see Interview with Georgina Amos, April 2010 in Zeballos, p.6 of transcript mentions working in fish plants in the 1950s

<sup>584</sup> Knight, R. *Indians at Work*.

<sup>585</sup> Greenwell, Kim 'Picturing "Civilization": Missionary Narratives and the Margins of Mimicry' in *BC Studies*, Issue 135, Autumn 2002, *Perspectives on Aboriginal Culture*; Kenyon, S.M. (1980) *The Kyuquot Way: A Study of a West Coast (Nootkan) Community*, National Museum of Man, Mercury Series, Canadian Ethnology Service Paper, Number 61, Ottawa; See also Moser (1925); Codere (1950); Duff (1964); Drucker & Heizer (1967).

these ventures were often not viable when the alternative of obtaining cash through wage-work was available. Nevertheless, Nuu'Chah'Nulth women were adventurous and industrious in their undertakings for economic rewards and this is clearly appreciated when Charlotte speaks about her grandmother.

She was very independent and she made money by doing, knitting hats and sweaters. And she sold them all over the place and then from about May till October she would go down to the States and follow the crops: strawberries, raspberries, and cherries, and apples, and she would make money doing that. She would come back home again for a few months and then she would be gone again.<sup>586</sup>

Nuu'Chah'Nulth women needed to find opportunities for wage-work and domestic activities as there were no government subsidies or ration payments until the late 1930s. Although government relief boats supplemented food rations, often with unhealthy food in comparison to their cultural diet of fish and berries, the people had to support themselves, families and dependants by working for wages or subsistence production or a combination of both.

Knight's research perceives a distinct lack of information about the role of women in the changing economy of the period, saying there are comparatively few Aboriginal women interviewed in classic, ethno-historical accounts. Even more problematic was the disproportionate amount of information emanating from chiefs within the old dominant sectors of First Nations society, and the persistent misconception these Northwest Pacific societies existed in a veritable 'Garden of Eden' where 'ready-smoked salmon launched themselves from the streams into the trenches of salalberry and oulachen sauce; where the superabundance of foods was always and everywhere available with the merest of effort.'<sup>587</sup> Prevalent and popular views generally disregard or gloss over the considerable evidence of suffering, hardship, and oppression between and within First Nation societies. The evidence emerging from these interviews with Nuu'Chah'Nulth women is enlightening and important, offering greater insights into women's lives that challenges the official perceptions of First Nation women.

## Residential Schooling

However, the most traumatic change to Nuu'Chah'Nulth life during the early part of the twentieth century was the introduction of residential schooling for all children. Although the history of Canadian residential schools had started in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the first school to be opened on Nuu'Chah'Nulth land was Christie Residential School near

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<sup>586</sup> Interview with Ina and Charlotte in Port Alberni; 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.4 of transcript; the time referred to would be the early part of the twentieth century.

<sup>587</sup> Knight, R. *Indians at Work*, pp25-26.



Tofino in 1900.<sup>588</sup> In the telling of their educational experiences, the women make reference to this residential school on a number of occasions. A story is told of a great-uncle being amongst the first children to attend Christie Indian residential school and the devastating effects the experience had on his life.

It was what the residential school was doing to our children right from 1910; my great grand-uncle, he was one of the first ten students ... sent to attend Christie Indian residential school. He was an alcoholic, he was a paedophile, a womaniser; all this he learned at the residential school. He was hard instead of gentle; he took on the residential school teachings.<sup>589</sup>

There are a number of photographs taken of children at residential school, posed portraits expressing the advantages of education for First Nation children that, with the right clothes and hair styles, children would find assimilation into white society easy and beneficial although an alternative opinion is expressed in Jackie's interview.

If you look at the pictures of the children they don't look happy at all ... In some of the pictures, the photographer, the professional photographer they hired would make sure you could tell they weren't happy ... in the residential school pictures.<sup>590</sup>

When the photographer came, the children were given dolls to hold and told to smile; once children had been photographed, the dolls were taken away.

Operating a residential school was a complex task. It was not only a school but also a place to be lived in, and considerable expertise was required to care for and educate children from another culture. The quality of care was very questionable and underfunding meant residential schools were sites of the struggle against poverty. However, inherent cultural differences against children were of more concern. Most critically, neither the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) nor the church guaranteed their employees, the 'daily parents', were appropriate and up to the task of educating First Nation children by providing an environment conducive to the education and care of these children.<sup>591</sup> The DIA set standards, and were the authority in employing personnel: the department, however, was negligent in the face of daily reports of abuse, cruelty, and incompetence from staff refusing to listen to parents complaints about the conditions in schools. It was very evident staff did not meet the challenging reality

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<sup>588</sup> Affiliated to Roman Catholics.

<sup>589</sup> Interview with Delores Bayne, April 2010: p.10 of transcript; her great-uncle was in the first group of ten students sent to Christie Indian residential school.

<sup>590</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, May 2009: p.5 of transcript; Report of the Nuw'Chah'Nulth Tribal Council (1996) *Indian Residential Schools: The Nuw'Chah'Nulth Experience: Indian Residential School Study 1992-1994*; Photographs depicting instances of Nuw'Chah'Nulth children and residential schooling seen in the archives, Victoria, April/May 2012; Robert Alexie's book 'Porcupine and China Dolls' is detailed on this point as boys hair was cut so short it looked like porcupines and girls short hair made them look like china dolls.

<sup>591</sup> Milloy, John S. (2000) *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879-1986*, University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg: pp129-131.

residential schools presented to them. At Alberni School, in 1910, Agent A. Neill is reported to have been exasperated following the arrival of Mr and Mrs H.B. Currie. He believed the couple to be very nice and well-intentioned, but realised they were totally unprepared and 'entirely inexperienced having absolutely no knowledge of school management, or of nursing or of handling Indians.'<sup>592</sup>

Agent Neill was keen to employ qualified and university educated people but it was brought to his attention schools were often isolated, positions poorly paid, and, it was suggested, 'a dumping ground for less-competent church staff.'<sup>593</sup> Residential schools provided opportunities for instructors who had been unsuccessful elsewhere, people like Mr Currie who was 'hardly big enough for his job,'<sup>594</sup> as the school rapidly declined. These arguments are strengthened and verified by the women as from personal experiences, they are very aware of the lack of qualified teachers.

The people who did come to run the residential schools were mostly people who were banned from their own countries in Europe and had been given the opportunity for a second life in Canada. And their role was ... they would be recognised as converting heathens into becoming just people, and the people who came were not of criminal behaviour.<sup>595</sup>

The ones who suffered were the children. Discipline, regimentation, and punishment were considered to be appropriate contexts for children: it was pervasive throughout the whole system. The District Inspector of Schools in British Columbia, Mr G. Barry, described the situation at Ahousaht School as a place where 'every member of staff carried a strap, and where children have never learned to work without punishment.'<sup>596</sup> 'It's the really bad people who would beat the children; they're the ones you hear about.'<sup>597</sup>

The primary purpose of residential schools was not to educate but to assimilate but these schools failed to meet this outcome.<sup>598</sup> Underfunding had adverse effects on the care

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<sup>592</sup> Milloy, J.S. *A National Crime*, p.130; N.A.C.RG 10, Vol. 6431, File 877-1 (1-2, 4) MR C 8758, Extract from Agent Neill's Report, n.d. March 1910; this Indian Agent Report was viewed April 2012 in the Archives Department of the Royal British Columbia Museum.

<sup>593</sup> Milloy, J.S. *A National Crime*, p.131.

<sup>594</sup> Ibid., p.131: N.A.C.RG 10, Vol. 4037, File 317021, MR C 10177, Dr P.H. Bryce, *Report on the Indian Schools, 1907*, 17, 19. Bryce was very critical of many of the staff in western schools that he surveyed, and blamed them, in part, for the poor health of the children; see also N.A.C.RG 10, Vol. 6431, File 877-1 91-2, 4, MR C 8758, Extract from a Report by R. Ferrier, n.d. 1921; Indian Agent Reports viewed at BC Archives in Victoria in April 2012.

<sup>595</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts in Port Alberni, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.21 of transcript.

<sup>596</sup> Milloy, J.S. *A National crime*, p.138; N.A.C.RG 10, Vol. 6430, File 876-1, MR C 8759, Report on Ahousaht School by G.H. Barry, n.d. 1936; see also Haig-Brown, C. (1988) *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School*, Tillacum Library, Vancouver, p.59.

<sup>597</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009; p.21 of transcript.

<sup>598</sup> Nuuch'Chah'Nulth Tribal Council (1996) *Indian Residential Schools: The Nuuch'Chah'Nulth Experience; Indian Residential School Study, 1992-1994*, Report by the Nuuch'Chah'Nulth Tribal Council: p.viii.

given to children as well as on the condition of the buildings. A few were even condemned as dilapidated and inadequate, and badly maintained buildings rapidly translated into bad health. There was little money available to address the rising number of children contracting and succumbing to tuberculosis. It was not until the end of the 1930s funding for sanatoria appeared, due to pressure from the Canadian Tuberculosis Society, although there was no funding to deal with health issues in schools. The limited available money was needed for and shared between food, clothes, and basic treatment for the children. Of the numerous written school reports, too many confirmed the necessity for stringent economising to meet budget shortfalls.<sup>599</sup> Too many reports noted children were not being adequately fed, clothed, or taught, and discipline often crossed the line into abuse as

...the vision of life and learning in the 'circle of civilized conditions' had not become a reality. The promise that children would receive the 'care of a mother'<sup>600</sup>  
...and an education that would elevate the child 'to a status equal to that of his white brother' remained unfulfilled.<sup>601</sup>

The early twentieth century was a time of great change for the Nuuchah-Nulth. Missionary concepts of marriage and family life radically altered the way people lived from the traditional to a new system – each man and woman living in their own home instead of a number of families dwelling in long houses – changing forever Nuuchah-Nulth society.<sup>602</sup> With the retirement of O'Reilly in 1898, the reserve map of British Columbia was more or less complete but the issue of location and size of the reserves persisted. Band leaders were adamant 'that most reserves were too small and access to resources too pinched to enable most Native people to make a reasonable living.'<sup>603</sup> With greater movement of people following employment opportunities, the removal of Nuuchah-Nulth children to residential school, the difficulty of adhering to a traditional hunter/gatherer lifestyle with all its associated values, communities were being pulled apart.

## Population Numbers

Interestingly, although it was believed to be a time when population numbers were declining, the people were not disappearing, and if they were vanishing they were taking a long time to do so as for nearly eighty years from the 1850s to the scientific establishments of the 1930s, this prediction had been repeated. According to Narvaez, a Spanish officer based at Nootka

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<sup>599</sup> Milloy, J.S. *A National crime*, p.105; One school principal forced to meet monetary shortfalls was the Principal of Christie Residential School, Victor Rassier, who economised to 'the bone in every department': p.105.

<sup>600</sup> The Davin Report, p.12.

<sup>601</sup> Milloy, J.S. *A National Crime*, p.107.

<sup>602</sup> Kirk, Ruth *Tradition & Change*, p.232.

<sup>603</sup> Harris, C. *Making Native Space* p.217.

Sound in 1791, there had been 'five large settlements in the whole archipelago and believed that they contained more Indians than Nootka and Clayoquot.'<sup>604</sup> This highly populated area of the Mowachaht encouraged wide-ranging social interactions between the Nuu'Chah'Nulth: inter-marriage, trading, potlatches, plus other social and economic intermingling, the seasonal use of the area's natural resources stabilised communities and increased population numbers.<sup>605</sup> Inter-tribal wars and skirmishes between bands had the most influence causing fluctuations in population figures. Arguments over acquisition of key salmon rivers or disputed territories were primary reasons for wars with the result some bands disappeared altogether while others scattered to relatives in other villages, and groups were formed corresponding to the major geographic divisions along the coast: population figures are consequently difficult to gauge with conflicting statistics. An explanation for these discrepancies and contradictions concerns the way population figures were recorded and interpreted.<sup>606</sup> Figures recorded by Boas conflicts with earlier records given by Sproat and O'Reilly. Sproat understood the discrepancies and reduction in numbers were due to wars and tribal skirmishes, whereas Boas records the Toquaht being of considerable size.<sup>607</sup> What is not in dispute is the fact population figures refer to the number of adult males as women were not included in population data.

By the beginning of the twentieth century population numbers had dwindled to less than ten per cent of earlier statistics,<sup>608</sup> an all-time low, confirming the prevailing belief Indians were disappearing; disease, inter-tribal warfare, and loss of traditional livelihoods and hunter/gatherer environments being major causes. Despite the thinking of people such as Barbeau and Leacock (even Sapir who believed Aboriginal languages would soon be forgotten and lost) Aboriginal people did not disappear. By the 1920s, population numbers began increasing with census figures showing a gradual rise between the 1940s and 1960s.<sup>609</sup> The rise was primarily due to the increasing number of dependent children, influenced by expansion in

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<sup>604</sup> Scott, R. B. (1972) *Barkley Sound: a History of the Pacific Rim National park Area*, Fleming-Review Printing Ltd., Victoria p.38; Mozino, *ibid*.

<sup>605</sup> Sapir, Edward & Swadesh, Morris (1955) 'Native Accounts of Nootka Ethnography', *International Journal of American Linguistics*, 21:4.

<sup>606</sup> Drucker, P. (1951) *The Northern and Central Nootkan Tribes*.

<sup>607</sup> Sproat, Gilbert M. *Scenes and Studies*; Boas, Franz (1890) *Second General Report on the Indians of British Columbia: Report of the Sixtieth Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science*: pp562-715.

<sup>608</sup> Since the 1940s population figures have continued to rise.

<sup>609</sup> RCAP (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples) (1996) *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, Canada Communications Group, Ottawa: Vol. 1, Chapter 2, Section 1: <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ap/pubs/sg/sg-eng.asp>; Goldman, G. *The Aboriginal Population and the Census: 120 Years of Information – 1871 to 1991*. Paper presented at the Conference of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, Montreal, 1993.

health and medical care provision because of the growth in nursing stations and hospitals, and a reduction in deaths from preventable diseases.<sup>610</sup>

## The 1930s

The 1930s were a watershed for Aboriginal people. First Nations began to assert themselves, joining political organisations to lobby government for improved education and health facilities, land issues, hunting/fishing rights, and the position of women in law, economic and political campaigns continuing into the twenty-first century. A resurgence of 'Indian identity' in British Columbia emerged at this time with the formation of the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia in 1932, and the Pacific Coast Native Fishermen's Association in 1936, the two organisations merging in 1942 although records of these organisations are limited.

Many avenues for employment ended or were permanently reduced, the main exception being the fishing industry, although reductions in fishing fleets and catches caused unrest and strikes. Women cannery workers participated in many of these fishing strikes affecting coastal regions as their employment depended upon the strengths of the fishing industry. During the early part of the 1930s, the number of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women employed in canneries declined due to mechanisation, although production improved towards the end of the decade as demand increased. The collapse of small-scale enterprises was seen throughout the Canadian economy as dog-fish oil and Indian curios no longer found a viable market, and the increasingly strict regulations for hunting and trapping had an adverse effect on First Nation communities and their lifestyle.<sup>611</sup> As relief and welfare payments were insignificant, Nuu'Chah'Nulth women were predominantly involved in a mix of subsistence, small-scale economic activities, waged labour, traditional work in resource industries, with handicraft production buoyant as Nuu'Chah'Nulth women continued to sell their weaving, knitting, and basketry goods along road and dock-side in Seattle and Port Alberni.

Women's money-making abilities seemingly changed less than men's economic opportunities as Nuu'Chah'Nulth women had been involved with waged-economy since maritime fur-trading times developing the skills and means to adapt and use opportunities when they arose. Women's relative importance in food production and local subsistence economies increased as men spent more time in waged-labour. Women continued to be responsible for preparing, smoking, and preserving fish as effective preservation was essential in achieving a surplus from seasonal catches in times of scarcity. Women fished for salmon in the sea and rivers, often from canoes; they dug, gathered, and preserved clams and other

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<sup>610</sup> TB and children's infectious diseases such as measles; Knight, Rolf (1978) *Indians at Work: An Informal History of Native Indian Labour in British Columbia, 1858-1930*, New Star Books, Vancouver.

<sup>611</sup> Knight, R. *Indians at Work* pp.196-205.

shellfish, collecting a wide assortment of berries and wild tubers, harvesting cedar and grasses for their basketry and weaving. Both the land and the sea were great providers for the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, and women's economic role is intricately connected to both. The forests, rivers and the ocean provided an abundance of foodstuffs allowing the people to create a nutritious, healthy and varied diet. Nuu'Chah'Nulth women played a significant part in managing the varied assortments of food: skinning, cleaning, preserving, and smoking meat of deer and other small mammals; cleaning, gutting, canning and smoking fish; picking, sun-drying, preserving berries – salmonberries, salal berries, blackberries, and other edible foods such as wild garlic growing in the forests; collecting and preserving clams, mussels, sea urchins and other shellfish from the beaches and rock pools. A seemingly endless supply of food was managed by the women to sustain communities throughout the year, using everything that was harvested, preserving and trading the surplus.

The evidence from Sapir, through his recorded tales and face drawings, is retained, and it is possible to see elements of his recollections in Nuu'Chah'Nulth life today. With a resurgence in traditional ceremonies, women are returning to earlier ways to communicate to younger generations 'what it means to be a Nuu'Chah'Nulth woman': the ceremony of brushing pine branches across surfaces before a meeting, eating sea-urchins to calm oneself, ceremonies depicted by Sapir in his drawings and still evidenced in Nuu'Chah'Nulth households today. One of the most affected and fragmented aspects of Nuu'Chah'Nulth life was loss of their language although there is now a revival in speaking and understanding Nuu'Chah'Nulth.

We have roles as women, speaking. What I am putting across is my language: my language is my strength. The creators help me pass the wisdom and the knowledge I know; the strengths I have, the strongest in me is my language.<sup>612</sup>

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<sup>612</sup> Interview with Delores Bayne, 29<sup>th</sup> April 2010: p.3 of transcript; Delores spoke at length about the importance of language. Delores is one of relatively few Nuu'Chah'Nulth speakers who spends time travelling to speak her language at different conventions. She said '*We are not to stop teaching our language; we are not to stop speaking our language; it's our strength*': p.4; interview with Louise, p.10 of transcript.

# Chapter Six: The Legacy of Colonialism, 1951-2013

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My great-grandmother was a really powerful woman; she was a leader. She taught us how to dance; she was a composer and a singer. She knew how to sing, chant and some of the songs she composed were used for entertainment.<sup>615</sup>

This chapter brings Nuu'Chah'Nulth history into the twenty-first century and considers how the interview narratives can be positioned with some pertinent events over the last sixty years: the 1951 amendment of the 1876 Indian Act, Bill C-31(1985), residential schooling experienced by the Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, Premier Harper's apology on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2008 to all former pupils of Indian Residential Schooling and the 1964 tidal wave on the west-coast of Vancouver Island.

## The Reworked Indian Act, 1951

After World War Two, Canadians developed a new awareness about First Nations, noticing three specific and worrying aspects: First Nation men had served their country admirably during the war but were not accorded the same recognition as other Canadians on their return; many First Nations people were living in poverty; and thirdly, Canadians were concerned about the way the government violated First Nation rights. Increasingly, people believed conditions for First Nations needed to improve. However, it took a special parliamentary committee, with advice from First Nation leaders, four years to review and rework the Indian Act by removing the more objectionable and outdated provisions enshrined in the act.<sup>616</sup> For the first time First Nation women would be allowed to vote in band elections, although the act still failed to protect their status.

The 1876 Indian Act had defined 'Indian', who is or who is not legally an 'Indian', issues of status, rights and identity:<sup>617</sup> women lost status if they married a man who was not a status Indian, and a child did not have status if born out of wedlock to a woman with status. Bonita Lawrence<sup>618</sup> notes the Act created differences amongst Aboriginal people, differences accepted as the norm within Canadian society, social divisions generated by legislation; the act 'ordered how Aboriginal

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<sup>615</sup> Interview with Genevieve, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010: p.18 of transcript; this amazing woman came from an extended, talented family, a descendent of Virginia Tom photographed by Edward Curtis in 1915.

<sup>616</sup> The 1951 Act reduced the control federal agents had on the Reserves giving a measure of self-government; the potlatch ban was removed; restrictions on trade were eased.

<sup>617</sup> First Nations could only vote in federal elections if they renounced Indian status.

<sup>618</sup> Lawrence, Bonita 'Mixed-Race Urban Native People: Surviving a Legacy of Policies of Genocide' in Laliberte, R. F., Sette, P., Waldram, J. B., Innes, R., MacDougall, B., McBain, L. & Barron, F. L. (Eds.)(2000) *Expressions in Canadian Native Studies*, University of Saskatchewan Extension Press, Saskatoon; pp.69-94.

people were to think.’<sup>619</sup> Like any diverse group, cultural distinctions and language differences do exist between Aboriginal people, and cannot be legislated for. The act attempted to control a diverse group of people, trying unsuccessfully to create a homogenous ethnic group. However, the most contentious and denigrating element was the clarification of women’s of status, an issue not resolved until late into the twentieth century.<sup>620</sup>

After years of pressure from First Nation women the Canadian government eventually passed Bill C-31 in June 1985, ending the discriminatory provision concerning the meaning of the word status. For the first time women had the right to keep or regain their status even if they had ‘married out’ and status was also granted to the children of that marriage.<sup>621</sup> Lawrence,<sup>622</sup> in discussing the feminist position on the relationship between the federal definition, the law, and First Nations identity, cites the struggles of Lavell and Bedard of the early 1970s, two First Nation women who lost status when they married white men.<sup>623</sup> Lawrence contends discrimination stemmed from the newly reworded and reworked act, although the Supreme Court ruled the act was not discriminatory as both women had gained the legal status of white women when they lost Indian status.<sup>624</sup> By marrying out, First Nation women also lost ‘band membership ...her property, inheritance, residency, burial, medical, educational and voting rights on the Reserve:’<sup>625</sup> women were now dependent on men for their identity, rights and status.

During the 1950s, Mary Two-Axe Early of Caugnawaga, Quebec, spoke out against Section 12(1)(b) but it was not until the 1970s Aboriginal women across Canada began to organise themselves, speak out and challenge injustice.<sup>626</sup> The 1973 ruling against Lavell and Bedard allowed the Act to remain in force leaving Aboriginal women with no possibility for challenge, or legal

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<sup>619</sup> Carrie Bourassa, Kim McKay-McNabb and Mary Hampton ‘Racism, Sexism and Colonialism: The Impact on the Health of Aboriginal Women in Canada’ p296 in Monture, P. A. & McGuire, P. D. (Eds.)(2009) *First Voices: An Aboriginal Women’s Reader*, INANNA Publications and Education Inc., Toronto.

<sup>620</sup> In 1956, Section 9 of the Citizenship Act was amended to grant formal citizenship to status Indians; see also <http://ActiveHistory.ca> ‘Seizing Canada’s Past: Politics and the Reinvention of Canadian History, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2012 with reference to new official Citizenship Guide.

<sup>621</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Indian\\_Act&printable=yes](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Indian_Act&printable=yes).

<sup>622</sup> Lawrence, B. *Mixed-Race Urban Native People*.

<sup>623</sup> Lawrence, B. (2003) ‘Gender, Race and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: an overview’, *Hypatia*, 18.2, pp3-31.

<sup>624</sup> Until 1985, section 12 (1)(b) of the act had *discriminated against Indian women by stripping them and their descendants of their Indian status if they married a man without status*; and another section refers to the ‘double mother’ clause which *removed status from children when they reached the age of 21 if their mother and paternal grandmother did not have status before marriage*.

<sup>625</sup> Tobique Women’s Group (1988) *Enough is Enough: Aboriginal Women Speak Out*, The Women’s Press, Toronto, Ontario: p.12.

<sup>626</sup> In 1973 the Supreme Court of Canada heard the case of Jeannette Corbiere Lavell and Yvonne Bedard against section 12(1)(b) and ruled in a 5:4 decision that the Indian Act was exempt from the Canadian Bill of Rights.



recourse in Canada. In 1977 Sandra Lovelace,<sup>627</sup> a Maliseet woman, forced the issue by taking her case to the United Nations Human Rights Committee which ruled in favour of Sandra Lovelace, finding Canada in breach of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights putting further pressure on the federal government to amend the act. Although it seemed as though victory was imminent, it was to be another four years before the act was finally amended with the passing of Bill C-31 in 1985. Gaining re-instatement was a major milestone for First Nation women; for some it had been a long struggle to eliminate 12(1)(b), to re-gain Indian status, their heritage, their identity and their birth-right. However, has the changing of the law changed people's perceptions and understanding of First Nation women, their living and working conditions?

Despite Bill C-31, the act has remained remarkably similar to the original act of 1876: government control still works counter to the main objective of the act, isolation from mainstream Canadian society instead of integration and assimilation. The Indian Act, an act regulating almost all Aboriginal life, has been one of the most pervasive pieces of legislation in Canadian history; an arbitrary and paternalistic act. Long-standing implications of the act continue to be evident for Aboriginal women. Between 1876 and 1985 over 25,000 women and their descendants lost status and were forced to leave their communities, alienating them from their culture, traditions and societies, damaging and disrupting kinship ties and family life, as well as denying the participation of women in governance and traditional community pursuits.<sup>628</sup> It is interesting to note the only recourse open to Aboriginal women was to appeal through judicial courts and the federal government, institutions ruled by the legislation. Despite new understandings in the post-colonialist era the process and continuing effects of colonialism persists for Aboriginal people, although there has been a change in political thinking since the 1970s moving from a desire to 'rid the country of the 'Indian problem' through cultural assimilation' to the need to 'compensate Aboriginal peoples for the damage done to their cultures, traditions and values' to the people themselves.<sup>629</sup>

'Since the 1970s a marked resurgence of interest in colonial matters ... occurred'<sup>630</sup> as, by the 1990s, scholars were exploring how the west defined Aboriginal culture through the impact of

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<sup>627</sup> December 29<sup>th</sup> 1977, complaint of Sandra Lovelace against the Canadian government is filed with the UN Human Rights Committee, Geneva, Switzerland; case discussed in Janet Silman (1988) *Enough is Enough: Aboriginal Women Speak Out*, The Women's Press, Toronto.

<sup>628</sup> Bourassa, C., McKay-McNabb, K. & Hampton, M. *Racism, Sexism and Colonialism*, pp.293-304.

<sup>629</sup> James, P. & Kasoff, M. (Eds.)(2008) *Canadian Studies in the New Millennium*, University of Toronto Press: p.100; Premier Trudeau's 'White Paper', 1969.

<sup>630</sup> Chaudhuri, Nupur & Strobel, Margaret (Eds.)(1992) *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, Indiana University Press, Indianapolis; Introduction, p.1; also writings in the 1950s and 1960s by Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, and O. Mannoni alert us to the dynamics of racism under colonialism. See also: Frantz Fanon (1963) *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press, NY and *Black Skin, White Masks: The Experiences of a Black Man in a White World*, trans. by Charles Lam Markman, (1952/1967) Grove Press, NY; Albert Memmi (1967) *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, trans. by Howard Greenfield, Beacon Press, Boston; O. Mannoni (1962)

settler encounters, how colonizers legitimised their authority, and how literature has embodied the justification for colonisation. Generally, theories and discourse about colonialism stressed its 'masculine' nature highlighting the essential components and elements of domination, control, and unequal power.<sup>631</sup> The colonial experience is expressed in terms of political and economic power and dominance, but what is missing from this framework is the history and influence of Aboriginal women in the process. In her article, 'Feminism and History', Judith Bennett asks historians not to create divisions between women as victims and women who have created their own spaces, culture, and lives as 'to emphasise one without the other creates an unbalanced history.'<sup>632</sup> Nuu'Chah'Nulth women present a good example, as in their efforts to keep families together have colluded with colonialism to survive. It has taken time to heal, to once again engage in traditional pursuits; it is only now, in the twenty-first century women's efforts are being rewarded with a resurgence of language, culture and traditional skills.

### Effects of and Thoughts about Colonialism

Writing in the 1960s, and reflecting sentiments expressed by Sproat one hundred years earlier, Sartre reflects on the early days of colonisation saying

...no effort will be spared to liquidate their traditions, substitute our language for theirs, destroy their culture without giving them ours; they will be rendered stupid by exploitation. Malnourished and sick, if they continue to resist; ... along come civilians who settle the land ... If they give in, they degrade themselves and they are no longer human beings; shame and fear fissure their character and shatter their personality.<sup>633</sup>

This relationship between Aboriginal people and the colonisers could be thought of as a contract between two groups of people but it is very obviously one sided. Sartre implies this contract cannot be enforced the inequality between the two cultures is too great, agreement is impossible.<sup>634</sup> He strengthens his arguments: colonisation cannot succeed unless this contract exists, as the colonised need to be inextricably linked through economic output. Consequently, economic control is a significant factor in the changing societies and economies characteristic of a nineteenth century colonised society. A key component in this equation was the continued growing demand for raw materials and land, and in British Columbia, with the decline of the maritime fur-trade focus had

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*Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonisation*, Praeger, New York; and Said, E. (1979) *Orientalism*, Vintage Books, New York.

<sup>631</sup> Chaudhuri, N. & Strobel, M. *Western Women and Imperialism*, p.3.

<sup>632</sup> Judith M. Bennett 'Feminism and History' in *Gender & History* 1, 1989: pp262-263; J. Bennett, a historian who writes about medieval women.

<sup>633</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul (1964/2001) *Colonialism and Neo-Colonialism*, Routledge, London (translated by Haddour, A., Brewer, S. & McWilliams, T.) Jean-Paul Sartre wrote these words in 1964 as part of the preface about Frantz Fanon's essay on colonised peoples, *The Wretched of the Earth*; Maspero, Paris p.142; see also Albert Memmi *The Colonizer and the Colonized*.

<sup>634</sup> Sartre, J-P. *Colonialism and Neo-Colonialism*, p.142.

turned to increasing resource extraction and land. Whatever understanding or explanation one has of colonisation there can be no doubt colonisation equates with exploitation.

Memmi describes the relationship between the colonised and the coloniser as being 'chained into an implacable dependence' that dictates behaviour and moulds character.<sup>635</sup> His idea of privilege is also central to his understanding of the colonial relationship: privilege is not only fundamentally economic but also socially superior as even the poorest settler thought himself to be above Aboriginal people. The thoughts of Memmi and Sartre converge: Sartre considers the system whilst Memmi is concerned with the situation colonialism produces, reminding us that however downtrodden the colonised become, the people still have their own belief systems and traditions. For Sartre, these traditions and beliefs, in other words the culture of these people, were all but destroyed in the name of acculturation, civilising and assimilating the people into the dominant culture.<sup>636</sup> Both these positions inform our understanding of the world of Nuuchah-Nulth women who, through colonialism, have been suppressed, side-lined and their voices silenced. The interviews give us a valuable window into their thoughts, a chance to listen to Nuuchah-Nulth women and hear their voice.

Colonisers reinforce their dominant culture by making the colonised conform to their expectations, as they consider themselves to be the ideal model for humanity, the carriers of a superior culture. Imposing educational systems and ideals onto the First Nations removes from them the right to speak.<sup>637</sup> In his analysis of colonialism, Memmi takes his argument further identifying ways to maintain power over Aboriginal people, strategies stressing difference that is advantageous to the coloniser, using the information to justify privilege and maintain the inferiority of Aboriginal people.<sup>638</sup>

In discussing the systemic violence of colonialism, how human rights have been denied 'to people it has subjugated by violence, and whom it keeps in poverty and ignorance, as Marx would say, in a state of sub-humanity'<sup>639</sup> Sartre agrees with Memmi, that 'colonisation carries the seeds of its own destruction.'<sup>640</sup> Sartre reinforces his musings by saying:

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<sup>635</sup> Memmi in Sartre p.7.

<sup>636</sup> Sartre, J-P. *Colonialism and Neo-Colonialism*, pp142-143.

<sup>637</sup> Battiste, M. (1986) 'Micmac Literacy and Cognitive Assimilation' in Barman, J., Herbert. Y. & MaCaskill, D. (Eds.) *Indian Education in Canada: The Legacy*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver: pp142-143; Battiste, M. (2000) 'Introduction: Unfolding the Lessons of Colonization' in Battiste, M. (Ed.) *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver: pp.xvi-xxx (pp16-30).

<sup>638</sup> Memmi, A. *The Colonizer and the Colonized*.

<sup>639</sup> Sartre writing in the Preface of *The Colonizer and the Colonized* by Albert Memmi (1965/1990); the phrase is also referred to on p.2 of the Introduction and p.50.

<sup>640</sup> Memmi *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, p.3.

Colonial violence does not only aim to keep these enslaved people at a respectful distance, it also seeks to dehumanise them. No effort will be spared to liquidate their traditions, substitute our languages for theirs, destroy their culture without giving them ours.<sup>641</sup>

The sentiments expressed by Sartre are reflected by Nuu'Chah'Nulth women who commented upon the economic and socio-cultural changes to their lives: the pressure to move from isolated communities into towns resulting in loss of livelihood; difficulties in finding work as the traditional hunter/gatherer lifestyle was limited due to federal impositions through the formation of Reserves; the need to accept government food hand-outs introduced to compensate for diminished fishing and hunting opportunities;<sup>642</sup> reliance on European foods, bought from government relief boats, radically changed diet and health; difficulties in paying for food as families became dependent on necessary government support; lack of economic opportunities; little money to support families; restricted Reserve living curtailing traditional activities; changes of attitude to traditional lifestyles; the cumulative effects of residential schooling; a never ending circle of infringements, external influences and demands impacting upon and increasingly altering women's lives. The traditional belief systems of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth came under assault and people were confronted with increasing social fragmentation and cultural disintegration. The defined roles and responsibilities of the women, particularly in regard to their families, were altered, often disappearing, and, as the women have struggled to maintain a social equilibrium their inner balance was lost, shattering the hoop that ensured stability and balance in their lives.<sup>643</sup>

In her paper, 'The Colonisation of a Native Woman Scholar', Emma LaRocque argues the 'history of Canada is a history of the colonisation of Aboriginal peoples.'<sup>644</sup> It is certainly true to say that colonisation has taken its toll on First Nation people but perhaps the greatest effects have been on women, their status, position in the community and the family, their economic standing 'within a very fine tuned governance system.'<sup>645</sup> Colonisation radically altered family structures and inter-relationships. Furthermore, the process of economic and cultural imperialism upset the pre-existing gender balance of power in Nuu'Chah'Nulth society.<sup>646</sup> This shift in gender relations contributed to

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<sup>641</sup> Sartre *Colonialism and Neo-Colonialism*, p.142; Sartre is referring to both Memmi's work and Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* Maspero, Paris 1961; Sartre wrote at a time when colonial empires were crumbling.

<sup>642</sup> It is only now in the twenty-first century that the Supreme Court is involved in finding solutions to the fishing controversies, to bring about new economic opportunities, or, it should be said, to revive and maintain their fishing culture: referenced from *The Globe*, November 2009.

<sup>643</sup> Allen, Paula Gunn *The Sacred Hoop*.

<sup>644</sup> Emma LaRocque (1989) 'The Colonisation of a Native Woman Scholar' in Miller C. & Chuchryk P. (Eds.)(2001) *Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom, and Strength*, The University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg, pp11-18; quote p.11.

<sup>645</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.5 of transcript.

<sup>646</sup> Devens, Carol (1992) *Countering Colonisation: Native American Women and Great Lakes Missions, 1630 – 1900*, University of California Press, Berkeley; Fiske, Jo Ann(1991) 'Colonisation and the Decline of Women's Status: The Tsimshian case' in *Feminist Studies*, 17:3 pp509 – 535; Coontz, Stephanie (1988/1989) 'The Native American Tradition' in *The Social Origins of Private Life: A History of American Families*, Verso, NY; pp41-72.

an imbalance within families, greatly exacerbating family tensions, and disrupting relationships. Within this imposed colonial structure the hierarchy places First Nation women at the bottom (although they inevitably thought differently about themselves within their own culture and society). Nuu'Chah'Nulth women spoke of these societal changes stressing although there was a great heaviness as they really had taken so much' there was also the realisation the colonisers had been unsuccessful.

When our granddaughter got up and sang [we realised] they didn't take it all away as here is this child and she is singing and she is singing in our language and singing our songs. They didn't, they may have tried but they didn't ... look how powerful she is.<sup>647</sup>

These women continue by saying despite all that had happened to and within Nuu'Chah'Nulth society, one aspect has been enduring, respect: 'the strongest core value that has persisted is respect for women.'<sup>648</sup>

Twenty years ago anthropologist, Diane Bell, remarked that although colonial discourse was changing, it paid 'scant attention to the different impacts of colonial practices on men and women.'<sup>649</sup> men continued to assume a political speaking role while women ran the welfare structures and services, worthy and important roles but often viewed as secondary to men's leading stance in First Nation matters. This automatically creates an unnecessary and arbitrary divide between women and men, the nurturers and the leaders, cementing the already apparent divisions of expectations and labour. Matters have changed over the last few years as women take leading political roles within tribal councils, treaty negotiations and important governance positions.<sup>650</sup>

Despite some positive indications of change, LaRocque reminds us colonial history is still taught and studied. We are constantly confronted by evidence of colonialism through attitudes, teaching in schools, and books still present in educational establishments. All aspects of education from elementary through to university deal with 'western-controlled education, language, literature and history.'<sup>651</sup> Although discourse within academic circles is changing, LaRocque<sup>652</sup> alerts us to the tendency of excluding or disregarding references to Aboriginal scholars, although papers now present a more balanced dialogue amongst First Nation researchers, with Aboriginal writers referenced and acknowledged. Like feminist studies, Aboriginal studies cross boundaries to seek understanding, so western assumptions can no longer claim to have the right to assume ownership of academic methodologies and discourse. First Nation writers, academics, and community workers

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<sup>647</sup> Interview with Ina and Charlotte, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.18 of transcript.

<sup>648</sup> Ibid.

<sup>649</sup> Miller & Chuchryk *Women of the First Nations*, p.15.

<sup>650</sup> Nuu'Chah'Nulth Tribal Council includes women; discussions with Dr Michelle Corfield on a number of occasions, 2008-2012.

<sup>651</sup> Emma LaRocque 'The Colonisation of a Native Woman Scholar' in Miller & Chuchryk *Women of the First Nations*: p.12.

<sup>652</sup> Note: Emma LaRocque was writing over twenty years ago.

encourage intensive discussions of ideas, visions, thoughts, and understanding of de-colonisation within their communities and the wider academic arena. Colonial interpretations of Canadian history are questioned, challenging cultural, political and economic understanding, encouraging people to reconsider and re-examine settler thinking.

Following the 1951 Indian Act, the Nuu'Chah'Nulth thought more politically, to consider the position of their people and how they could more effectively deal with issues directly affecting them, particularly matters relating to women who played an increasingly active involvement in band affairs.<sup>653</sup> In 1958, First Nation 'Nootka' bands formed their own political organisation, the West-Coast-Allied Tribes. Over the next twenty years until 1978, this organisation was incorporated as a non-profit society<sup>654</sup> when the name Nuu'Chah'Nulth was agreed, the collective name given to all 'Nootka' bands. In 1979, the Nuu'Chah'Nulth Tribal Council, including a good proportion of women, became the political and cultural forum for all decision making, becoming more involved in mainstream Canadian society, the treaty-making process, land claims and other political affiliations, successfully lobbying for their rights. In the years between the 1951 Indian Act and the release of the Red Paper (1970),<sup>655</sup> First Nation women became increasingly aware of their political and legal rights, politically more active, more visible, and more vocal.<sup>656</sup> There was a feeling nothing would get done if women did not organise themselves by bringing health concerns and social issues into the political arena. Women emerged from domestic roles to become part of the process to rebuild and reshape their lives and communities, motivated by a desire to improve conditions, to reclaim a system of governance that respected and valued them as women.

The women in this study are an important part of this political process holding positions of responsibility in the Tribal Council, in local government health and education departments, as community workers and initiators, as hereditary chiefs, as key workers in the judiciary, the prison service, and youth provision, health and educational initiatives. It was very apparent the women consider education to be the most important aspect of life that change will not happen without education. For these women, and many others like them, the ending of the residential school system of education was cause for celebration, a start towards the regeneration of communities. Over 50%

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<sup>653</sup> Report by the Federal Department of Citizenship and Immigration on its Indian Affairs Branch for the fiscal year ending March 31<sup>st</sup> 1953; First Nation women could now vote in band elections.

<sup>654</sup> The West-Coast District Society of Indian Chiefs in 1973 and the West Coast District Council until 1979; these are all successive names for the same entity.

<sup>655</sup> The Red Paper, also referred to as "Citizens Plus" was released by the Indian Association of Alberta in 1970; it was the Indian response to the federal government's *Statement of Government of Canada on Indian Policy (1969)*, also known as the White Paper, which aimed at reneging on treaty promises. The assimilationist objectives of the White Paper back-fired on the government as it only served to galvanise Indian solidarity. First Nations were demanding their voices be heard.

<sup>656</sup> Voyageur, Cora (2008) *Firekeepers of the Twenty-First Century: First Nations Women Chiefs*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal.

of the women interviewed had attended residential school during the 1950s and 1960s, and all had memories of family members being forced to attend because it was the law. The last buildings of Port Alberni residential school were finally demolished in early 2009, the event marked with a huge celebration.<sup>657</sup> However, there is still much to be done in community rebuilding, and the infrastructure to accomplish this is woefully inadequate.

In 1970, the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women was published. Chaired by Senator Florence Bird, the commission found Canadian women to be second class citizens, and based on these findings produced 167 recommendations to promote equality for women. Over forty years have passed but Canadian women still lack a pan-Canadian child-care support system, and equal representation in parliament. In 1960, women earned 54 cents to a man's dollar; by 1999 this had risen to 72 cents although eleven years later had decreased to 70 cents. The statistics for Aboriginal women are far worse. In Vancouver, 30% of the homeless are Aboriginal people, and the children are up to six times more likely to be removed from their families. When the report was first written, it was very noticeable only a tiny section focused on Aboriginal women; out of 167 recommendations only three applied to Aboriginal women and only one has been implemented.<sup>658</sup> A federal study (1979) concluded:

Indian women likely rank among the most severely disadvantaged in Canadian society. They are worse off economically than both Indian men and Canadian women and although they live longer than Indian men, their life expectancy does not approach that of Canadian women generally.<sup>659</sup>

First Nations are at the bottom of every available index of socio-economic well-being, whether educational levels, employment opportunities, housing conditions, per capita incomes, and measured against scales giving non-Aboriginal Canadians one of the highest standards of living, although they usually top lists for homelessness, communities without adequate sanitation, alcoholism, domestic violence and drug abuse.<sup>660</sup> Inadequate representation in First Nation organisations, education, and lack of official representation in self-government decision-making has been, and still is in many instances, an issue. However, there are changes. First Nation women have representation on Tribal Councils, holding posts at high levels, their views listened to and respected. My request to the Nuuch'Chah'Nulth Tribal Council for permission to interview women was formally

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<sup>657</sup> From transcripts of 13 interviews, April / May 2009 & 2010.

<sup>658</sup> From 'Status of Women in Canada: Summary of Commission Recommendations' by Benjamin Schlesinger, *The Family Co-Ordinator*, Vol.20, No.3 (Jul., 1971), pp253-258; Government reports continue to document the formidable problems faced by Aboriginal women in Canada.

<sup>659</sup> Research Branch, P. R. E., Indian and Inuit Affairs Program (1979) *A Demographic Profile of Registered Indian Women, October 1979*: p.31.

<sup>660</sup> Commission on Social Determination of Health, WHO Forum II, August 21<sup>st</sup> 2009; Dr Evan Adams, Aboriginal Health Physician Advisor: The socio-determinants that measure Aboriginal health cover poverty, education, housing, self-determination, culture, land, environmental stewardship, family and child-welfare: an overview of current knowledge.

presented by the Vice President, Dr Michelle Corfield. Her persuasive arguments, clearly detailing the importance of my research, were considered, discussed and agreed. Although not present at the meeting, I have been told there was a strong acknowledgement of the vital role of women in Nuu'Chah'Nulth history, the necessity to balance Nuu'Chah'Nulth history, and to allow the women a voice in the telling of their history.

The Canadian government has tried to assimilate Aboriginal people into white society believing it to be the easiest way to make the 'Indian problem' disappear, that assimilation was a fair and sensible policy to produce an integrated society, a policy blind to diversity. As the reality of colonialism is founded on colonialist thinking so the Canadian government, trusting in the mechanisms of assimilation and residential schooling, believed Aboriginal people would become civilised and therefore able to exist in society as Canadian citizens. The reality is different: the people have retained their culture and traditions, appropriated knowledge from the coloniser's culture to further enrich and augment their own, although the process has been fraught with difficulties.

Colonisation impacted upon First Nations society to such an extent women's role and lifestyle was marginalised and devalued. The mechanisms arising from colonisation altered First Nations culture, restricted social mobility, denied access to resources that sustained traditional lifestyles creating inequities within and between communities.<sup>661</sup> Many believe the destruction of First Nations social spheres began with the forced rearrangement of gender roles, the social devaluation and marginalisation of women due to the imposition of white European perceptions of women, silencing women's voices, and denying women influence and power. Whilst this is true, I believe the traumatic effects of residential schooling are also detrimental and destructive to Nuu'Chah'Nulth women and their families.

## Residential Schooling

Difficulties within families were compounded by the compulsory and lawful removal of children to residential schools. Family life was torn apart, changing women's lives radically:

I grew up on the Broken Group on the islands in Barkley Sound; we rowed all the way, in our canoes; we moved up in the summer for the sockeye salmon runs until such a time when they came and picked us up for residential school and then we lost track of everything.<sup>662</sup> The children had to go to school. They were forcibly removed from their homes and ... put in the residential schools. ... Parents had no authority over what was happening ... Part of the

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<sup>661</sup> Valaskakis, G.G., Dion Stout, M. & Guimond, E. *Restoring the Balance*.

<sup>662</sup> Interview with Kathy Robinson, May 2009: p3 of transcript; Kathy is an Elder in her 80s; Jackie Watts mentions her grandparents who attended residential school in the early part of the twentieth century: *1912 or something like that, that's when they went to residential school, when they were very little*: p.5 of transcript; many of the women interviewed were the children being removed from their families to residential schools.



threat to a lot of the parents was the law would be involved if they didn't allow their children to go.<sup>663</sup>

Residential schooling has had a devastating impact on these Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, their families, and communities, undermining and displacing traditional roles, thereby affecting children's education, traditional practices, and family structures, all necessary to the intergenerational transmission of Nuu'Chah'Nulth language, culture and skills.<sup>664</sup> The residential school was a circle, an all-encompassing environment of re-socialisation, comprising the whole life of the child; one culture was to be replaced by another through work, a surrogate mother, and the teacher. Women's role changed, and in the process, acquired a dependency on a very different way of life, with fragmented families, and the quietening of women's voices. Families moved into Port Alberni to be near their children in order to keep alive strong family bonds and traditions.<sup>665</sup>

It was very difficult for both of them to let us go to the residential school ... So that was probably why they lived in Port Alberni, close to the residential school.<sup>666</sup>

Nuu'Chah'Nulth mothers and grandmothers found employment within the residential school system to keep family connections strong, to keep a protective watch over their children:

[They] did a lot of washing. ... I think just the fact their presence was there ... so they had a lot of involvement. They did a lot of the cooking and the baking for them and things like that ... they wanted to make sure that they knew what was happening, what was going on with their children although they couldn't protect them all the time but they tried.<sup>667</sup>

Despite having to attend residential school, the women were positive about the importance of education as the crucial reason for moving from isolated communities into town. It was the need for children to be educated, to have the skills necessary to deal with change, the ability to speak and write English enabling them to live and be effective communicators in a white man's world in the twenty-first century. The women recognise education broadens understanding, the importance of placing knowledge within the worldview of Nuu'Chah'Nulth perspectives.

It wasn't just our need to be educated, it was our parents need to have us educated primarily why we moved to Port Alberni was education and our parents. They knew we couldn't if we stayed on our Reserves.<sup>668</sup>

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<sup>663</sup> Interview with Charlotte, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.10 of transcript; parents were jailed for refusing to let children go to residential school; these two women came from a large family but it was only the older children who attended residential school.

<sup>664</sup> Norris, M.J. 'The Role of First Nations Women in Language Continuity and Transition' in Valaskakis, G.G., Dion Stout, M. & Guimond, E. (Eds.)(2009) *Restoring the Balance*: pp313-353; see also interview with Eileen, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009 on p.3 of transcript where she talks about peoples recognition of the '*impact of the multi-generational impact of the residential schools and how the women are beginning to address that issue within themselves.*'

<sup>665</sup> Notes from Port Alberni Library: sociological data on moving; Nuu'Chah'Nulth Tribal Council (1996) *Indian Residential Schools: The Nuu'Chah'Nulth Experience: Report of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth Tribal Council; Indian Residential School Study 1992-1994*, Nuu'Chah'Nulth Tribal Council, Canada.

<sup>666</sup> Interview with Charlotte, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: pp.20-21 of transcript.

<sup>667</sup> Interview with Charlotte, p.21 of transcript; relates to the 1950s.

<sup>668</sup> Ibid., p.9.

Even women who did not attend residential school were able to reflect critically upon the more subtle, and possibly indirect, efforts for healing that will undoubtedly benefit subsequent generations. Eileen mentions the erosion of language and culture, of being belittled, how children were persecuted for speaking Nuuchah'Nulth, why parents were frightened of speaking and teaching children their language.

There was an abolishment of the language, the culture, and the really strong sense of who you were as a human being; that was taken away. There was lots of punishment; there was a lack of acknowledgement. All the good things that happened within a family when you were growing up were gone. Children were treated less than animals in the residential school system, especially in the beginning years. ... It is very difficult to be extremely specific [about women's roles] because as the residential school came forward there was such an erosion and there was such a hesitancy by many of our parents to share their traditional roles.<sup>669</sup> And so one time I asked my father 'why didn't you teach me the language? And he said 'I never wanted you to go through what we had to go through. People were beaten and they had bars of soap that were turned around in their mouths so they could hardly breathe anymore, and they had things stuffed into their mouths that they had to keep in their mouths for days to stop them from speaking their language. I never wanted you to have to go through that'.<sup>670</sup>

Eileen is arguably very moved and upset when she recounts this story, but she also reveals her anger of being denied the opportunity to know and speak her language: "My older siblings were fluent and I was the last of twelve; I have the basic but other than that I'm not anywhere near even semi-fluent."<sup>671</sup> However, she laughs, and tongue in cheek, recounts the story of her elder blind sister, sent home from residential school because of her disability. The authorities believed a child who was blind, could not be taught and could not learn. "She was sent home and actually it was to our benefit" says Eileen. "She stayed with our grandparents and so through her much was passed on,"<sup>672</sup> the traditions, protocols and language. Kathy, a Nuuchah'Nulth speaker, translator, linguist and Elder said despite being forbidden to speak Nuuchah'Nulth, the language and culture has persisted. When asked how many young people spoke Nuuchah'Nulth and how many are fluent speakers, there is a mixed response.

Not all of them. They're learning it, they understand part of what you're saying, some can say yes or no but they can't answer you. We have three fluent speakers that's all.<sup>673</sup>

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<sup>669</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.10 and p.5 of transcript; Eileen did not go to residential school although her older brothers and sisters did, about eight of them, *not the oldest the next eight, the last three of us did not*: p.11.

<sup>670</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard: p.6 of transcript.

<sup>671</sup> Ibid., pp5-6 of transcript.

<sup>672</sup> Ibid., p.10 of transcript; protocols, language and traditions were passed on to other family members.

<sup>673</sup> Interview with Kathy Robinson, May 2009: p.12 of transcript; the numbers of fluent Nuuchah'Nulth speakers have decreased due to residential schooling; she talked about three fluent speakers and is concerned that when they die (one gentleman is in his 90s) their language will disappear; see interview with Delores Bayne: p.3 of transcript.

The resistance of Nuu'Chah'Nulth people in their refusal to readily abandon their language, compounded by a dearth of teaching talent, has led to many mixed experiences in residential schools, reflected in communities today.

The issue of residential schooling had not been considered in the initial stages of formulating the research proposal and interview questions but, without exception, every woman interviewed related life experiences, responsibilities and economic value within Nuu'Chah'Nulth society to traumatic residential school experiences, how, through fragmentation, families and communities underwent change. However, the women felt it was extremely difficult to be specific about effect and change as, when residential schooling arrived, there was 'such an erosion of traditions and culture, a hesitancy by many of our parents to share their traditional roles and language' with us.<sup>674</sup> One of the negative effects women were certain about was the quietening of women's voice. Ina is very eloquent in her explanation.

A lot of things had happened, mainly residential schooling, ... voices had been quieted and women need to recognise our voice was there ... because of residential schools it has become fractured in understanding because I think many women do not recognise their roles or voices anymore but they are starting to, we have a revival.<sup>675</sup>

Not all the women attended residential school however all have been affected by these harrowing experiences. What is not known is how their lives have altered, to what degree, and the ways in which these experiences have impacted upon their sense of well-being. Many are going through healing processes to regain strength, to come to terms with residential school experiences, in their attempts to believe in and understand themselves again, to cope with life. The women feel, quite rightly, until their minds and bodies have healed, supporting communities and families is an impossible task; the effects are multi-generational.

At this midlife point of their lives the women are reconciling their experiences, attempting to move beyond them towards healing themselves in a determination to help and mediate for others. One meeting is particularly pertinent at this time. Despite the lack of opportunity for an in-depth interview Brenda described her extraordinary upbringing, the emotional experiences of being raised by her grandmother as her parents were alcoholics, that, despite hardship, adversity and living with alcoholism (she herself is a recovering alcoholic and has been 'dry' for twenty-two years) she has raised a family of nine children, and returned to school to graduate in Home-Care Studies. She said: "despite everything I have a job; I am a home care nurse; I have a career; I look after clients in their homes."<sup>676</sup> All the women recognise the importance of healing to the growth of the community, and

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<sup>674</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.5 of transcript.

<sup>675</sup> Interview with Ina, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.1 of transcript.

<sup>676</sup> Interview with Brenda, April 27<sup>th</sup> 2010; this interview took place in Gold River, and was compiled from notes taken at the time due to the malfunction of the recorder; the relatively slow pace of the interview allowed for

to their responsibilities within that community. 'I was the first in my whole family to heal myself',<sup>677</sup> believing the process of healing and cleansing has encouraged her and others like her, to successfully re-engage with life again.

Finding out who I really am and being proud of who I really am and that there is nothing wrong with who I really am. I don't have to try and be somebody else I can be just me.<sup>678</sup> Delores relates her healing process differently. For her, it has been knowledge, understanding, and use of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth language that has enabled her to heal herself although her comments clearly show the multi-generational repercussions arising from residential school experiences:

I'm trying to say OK to the children, I am trying to apologise to my children and grandchildren that I wasn't the mother or grandmother I should have been. I became an alcoholic, I became controlling when I should have been gentle, the way I was taught (the Nuu'Chah'Nulth way). I took the ways of the residential school teachers. I spoke to my children in harsh tones when all the while my grandmothers had very gentle voices. Now, today, the way I speak I try to teach them to be gentle, and loving. Leave aside what we learned in the residential school; we learned how to lie, we learned how to do alcohol, we learned how to be abusers, we learned how to be controllers. My language is my strength, now I can face the world and teach the people and my children the right thing, and bring back what our ancestors left for us. This is the way I am now.<sup>679</sup>

Kathy Robinson emphasises the need for and importance of cleansing and healing, to become whole again:

I don't know what would have helped except our own souls. My grandmother would have been up there on the mountains, that's where we would have stayed for a while to cleanse and cleanse and cleanse. ... I believed in a lot of what we were told as I have watched everyone take care of their own bodies, drink what they had to, to keep their insides clear.<sup>680</sup>

Until the apology by Premier Harper and the Residential School Settlement in 2007, these women had not spoken about their residential school experiences, had been unwilling to remember, preferring to bury memories in their subconscious.

On receiving a letter from Ottawa in regard to her claim pertaining to her years of attendance at residential school, Jackie realised she was, in fact, being asked to remember everything she had tried to forget.

Just reading those few words upset me so much I had to put it aside, I couldn't deal with it. I had spent my entire life pushing down, subduing, and forgetting, and now, all of a sudden, I get this letter saying try to remember everything you can. My response back to them was: I

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verbatim comments. Brenda was extremely proud of the fact that she had not had an alcoholic drink for twenty-two years.

<sup>677</sup> Interview with Louise, 30<sup>th</sup> April 2010: p.8 of transcript.

<sup>678</sup> Ibid., p.12 of transcript.

<sup>679</sup> Interview with Delores Bayne, 29<sup>th</sup> April 2010: pp10-11 of transcript.

<sup>680</sup> Interview with Kathy Robinson, May 2009: p.4 of transcript; an oblique reference to the Statement of Apology to all former pupils of the residential school system made by Stephen Harper PM on June 11<sup>th</sup> 2008.

had spent my entire life trying to forget each day I spent at school. None of us would talk about it, it's incredible.<sup>681</sup>

Jackie offers her summation of residential school experiences.

Because of the interference of the residential schools that interfered with parenting styles and skills were taken away. The child was the gift from the Creator and was treated with the utmost respect, they are given to us with everything that comes with that, the celebration of life and the continuation of life means generations to come will continue on and keep the legacies of families and so with the interruption of residential schools there was a lot that had gone missing but there is still a lot that is here.<sup>682</sup>

Increasingly, the stories and events recounted by the women were not always negative. There is evidence of positive aspects of being at residential school: making friends, meeting relations from isolated bands and girls from all over Vancouver Island, companionship, strengths from other women, acquiring new skills as well as teaching skills to others, learning to read, write and speak English. The women are adamant changing women's primary focus from the family and the home to the wider community is due to education.

It wasn't just our need to be educated it was our parents' need to have us educated as that alone broadens your scope in understanding yourself; more worldly understanding, more worldly views. It changes your thinking as you have to try and balance both of those worlds.<sup>683</sup>

As great importance was put on learning English girls were encouraged to continue their schooling, to graduate, studying for educational, health and social work. It is believed when you educate girls you educate the whole family so parents and grandparents were resolute in their desire for children to learn English realising children's ability to live in a white world was untenable if they were disadvantaged through a lack of proficiency in English. Yet again, Jackie acknowledges her parents' recognition of the advantages of knowing English, a belief in education.

They always encouraged literature. My grandparents always said it was important to read even though it wasn't part of Nuuch'Chah'Nulth culture which is very oral. My grandparents had very strong beliefs that if you had that ability to read English as a base you could do anything you wanted: you could be a cook, you could read a menu, you could write a cookbook; if you wanted to be anything professional at all and you could read, you could do it.<sup>684</sup>

Reading, speaking and writing in English, considered essential prerequisites for success, for being able to live purposefully and comfortably in the twenty-first century, were encouraged by families: 'even though they hung onto our oral language, they weren't allowed to speak the language because they were beaten; it was part of the assimilation process.'<sup>685</sup> Knowledge of English meant the priests

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<sup>681</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009: pp3-4 of transcript.

<sup>682</sup> Ibid: p.7 of transcript.

<sup>683</sup> Interview with Ina and Charlotte, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.9 of transcript.

<sup>684</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009: p.2 of transcript.

<sup>685</sup> Ibid: p.3 of transcript.

and teachers could enforce control on what was taught and what was learned. For Nuu'Chah'Nulth children who were non-English speakers when they first attended residential school, it was imperative they mastered English as quickly as possible to be able to communicate; it helped to bridge the gap between school and their Nuu'Chah'Nulth-speaking parents.

Although residential schooling introduced girls to new skills they were denied the opportunities of learning their traditional skills as the girls had been removed from the teaching circles of Nuu'Chah'Nulth Elders, their grandmothers and great-aunts. Traditionally, young people relied upon opportunities throughout childhood to observe, play, help, organise, and mimic the skills needed in adult life, to acquire the environmental and technical knowledge needed to prepare raw materials for weaving, to learn the skills of weaving, to catch, clean, gut, and smoke fish, to collect and clean clams from the beach, and to preserve the berries gathered from the forests, to provide the necessary subsistence foods for survival. Many of these activities were seasonal and the girls were away at residential school at these critical times. Nevertheless, girls did have opportunities to learn new skills in residential school. Jackie was taught the technicalities of crocheting by her grandmother who had learned this intricate skill at residential school:

...she weaved and she also crocheted, that was brought to her through the residential schools. It was something she did do; and it was really fine needle crocheting.<sup>686</sup> Although I was not told who taught her grandmother, Jackie indicates crochet, like beading and knitting, are examples of the transference of skills learned from girls from other bands who met in residential school away from home.

The women talked about the consequences of residential school experiences resulting in adult addictions, and a perceived inability to parent well, how their actions were recognised as having significance for the lives and well-being of their children and grandchildren. One woman explained her struggles and challenge of mastering study to obtain higher educational qualifications for work despite her devastating experiences in residential school.<sup>687</sup> Parents lost parenting skills and children forgot how to live in a family. As residential schools took hold, there was an erosion of traditions, community living, and family life; women lost their primary role in Nuu'Chah'Nulth life. Women talked about the breakdown in family structures although they believe change is happening. Balance within families is returning, helping women regain respect.

You have heard many references to mothers, and now there is a resurgence with much more, much more respect given to Aboriginal women; belief, ... value, you are cherishing who that lady is; you're seeing a strong thrust, moving forward and bringing ladies forward to that place they historically held. So there is a change from the times of the residential school and the time of contact there has been so much change in our society, such a break-

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<sup>686</sup> Ibid: p.23 of transcript.

<sup>687</sup> Interview with Brenda in Gold River, Spring 2010.

down of family values, family structures, and parenting; there has been such extreme deterioration in our families, such devastation to many families with so many children in foster care; but we are seeing women bringing the voice from within forward and quietly asserting that strength.<sup>688</sup>

They are convinced of the power and strength returning to Nuuchah'Nulth women; as they heal women are regaining a balance in their thinking and belief in themselves, seeing the process of healing as on-going.

We're strong and we're still here; they almost wiped us out. ... I think the women of a long time ago were stronger than what they are now, what they are today ... but the next generation maybe, that's what I think; it'll be the next generation will be the powerful ones; they will be the powerful ones, the women.<sup>689</sup>

Nuuchah'Nulth people, living in many of the isolated villages, recognise the multi-generational impact of residential schools and are beginning to address these issues amongst their families and communities. Workshops were planned and managed by two enterprising Nuuchah'Nulth women who recognised the necessity for people to have the skills to manage their lives for the better.<sup>690</sup>

The training sessions had three main purposes: for the people to recognise within themselves the need to acquire skills, to gain strength for dealing with family and community issues as they arise, and to involve themselves in treaty and land-claims procedures. I saw first-hand the importance of these meetings to the people as the gatherings provided a supportive forum in which to be honest, to confront the issues denying them opportunities to move forward, and to find ways to make that move. As I was a visitor, it was important for me to be introduced, my purpose for attending explained, and permission requested from the whole group to allow me to remain, listen and take notes. With permission granted people relaxed and involved me in the group activities. In one sense, my presence may have allowed greater discussion of some issues, an opportunity for women to have their say and come forward in an unthreatening environment. It was certainly true women spoke out about the changes they wanted to happen, their fears in negotiating that change and the support they needed to achieve change in their lives.<sup>691</sup>

Whilst the colonial educational agenda was taking place, communities were being transformed so the villages children returned to were unrecognisable. The 1894 Indian Act amendment prohibiting the potlatch was due to the belief interrelated cultural values and practices were in direct conflict with the proposed assimilation of First Nations. The impact of these

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<sup>688</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009: p.2 of transcript.

<sup>689</sup> Interview with Kathy Robinson, May 2009: p.12 of transcript.

<sup>690</sup> The workshops were originally set up to provide skills to manage the treaty-making process, but it was quickly realised until the people themselves addressed their own personal demons (alcohol and drug abuse, residential schooling etc.) they would not have the competences to be effective treaty negotiators. The workshops were funded by the Tribal Council.

<sup>691</sup> The workshops have finished; the instigators, two Nuuchah'Nulth women, have since run follow-up sessions, and the results are promising.

oppressive policies on traditional practices was significant as girls were denied their language, skills and traditions. Many women spoke of the lack of respect for their traditional Nuu'Chah'Nulth way of life, perceiving a visible difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. One woman, Charlotte linked her sense of loss of respect for women to the different perceptions of women accentuated in residential schools, talking about the influences of the church and the people who managed the schools:

It was taught that it was shameful; there was a loss of respect of women and, I think, a loss of identity for many people.<sup>692</sup>

A different perception of respecting oneself and others is suggested when Nuu'Chah'Nulth teachings are linked to aspects of residential schooling. Jackie explains:

“I think my grandmother always said you have to respect yourself no matter where you go or whatever you do. So act respectfully, and be respectful. ... You know what else came out of the residential school? It was the Bible, lots of the Bible although I'm not sure whether or not to say the whole Bible but some of the core values reflect Nuu'Chah'Nulth traditional values too – you do not steal, the ten commandments because they were also, if you look at some of our stories and fables and morals they are similar to and reflect the Ten Commandments; and my grandmother would tell the stories and she would say that is why it is so important not to be greedy, not to steal. Our stories weren't based on the Ten Commandments but you can see they were similar.”<sup>693</sup>

The trauma of residential schooling and the impositions of the Indian Act continue today affecting the identities, language, culture, and social practices of First Nations, including the devaluing and denigration of women's traditional roles and the respect due to them although the women are using their strengths and beliefs to address the problems through healing and education.

Women were (and are) instrumental in ensuring stability within Nuu'Chah'Nulth society, the continuation of life, the providers of sustenance. The centrality of women to the social well-being of the whole community was never questioned, and the welfare of children and elders, the equal distribution of food and gifts at potlatches was of paramount importance. With the arrival of the colonisers came the imposition of their system of laws and values and, for First Nation women, their traditional roles and understandings of life were obliterated. The Indian Act<sup>694</sup> and associated assimilation projects caused immense harm to the health and social integrity of First Nation women. Residential schools allowed the Minister of Indian Affairs control of education for Aboriginal people entailing a separation of children from their families, with the inevitable outcome of destroying women's societal and central place as the family anchor. Families were torn apart, and women's role

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<sup>692</sup> Interview with Charlotte, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.15 of transcript.

<sup>693</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009: p.24 of transcript.

<sup>694</sup> The *Indian Act* was amended in 1906 to define a 'person' as an individual *other* than an Indian. An amendment, redefining the term, was not made until 1951. The restrictions affecting women as legal 'non-persons' which denied them entry into medical schools and the legal professions was applied from 1869 until the restrictions were repealed in 1985, over one hundred years later.



as the centre of the family ceased to exist. Government thinking assumed it was easier to assimilate Aboriginal children into Canadian society if they were separated from family and parental influences, and education was the key for this to be successful. Parents were not allowed to visit their children, and even if children managed to return home at all, it was only for a few weeks in the summer months. For many, returning home was not an option unless the family owned a boat. Kathy remembered when her:

Grandparents came up to see us; they told us to listen to them, not to disobey but to listen to them. We can't take you home but we can come and get you when it is summer time.<sup>695</sup> Kathy continued, talking about her happy childhood, of being with other children and women in the community, skinning, picking berries, and swimming in the waters of Barkley Sound around the Broken Group Islands. A sudden remembered memory of being on the beach triggered something more traumatic:

They came and picked us up for residential school ... we were only five years old. They picked everybody up and we stayed there for a whole year.<sup>696</sup>

### **Employment, Communities and Politics**

Aboriginal people have been hit harder by the current economic downturn than other communities,<sup>697</sup> with opportunities for employment restricted. Change of economic structure in families after the 1964 tidal wave caused people to move to towns as coastal areas flooded and harvests were affected, the hunter/gatherer way of life disappears and family life changed. Although fishing continued, it became imperative that both women and men find waged employment in town. For the first time many families had to pay rent. Women adjusted better to these changes in circumstances as traditionally they were adept at ensuring survival, engaging in a variety of jobs, whatever was available: weaving and knitting for sale at home and abroad; trading sweaters for bags of clothes;<sup>698</sup> selling baskets to tourists; employment in the service economy of washing, cooking, hotel and domestic work; work in the canneries. Women drew upon many traditional skills:

I learned how to knit, learned how to skein wool and crochet; our grandmother brought that knitting skill with her. [Our mum] taught us how to sew; she made all our clothes; she looked at a catalogue, we told her what we wanted and what we liked, what style we wanted and she just cut it out. She made shirts for the boys. She was very talented. Nowadays with that talent she would have done lots of things. ... My grandmother did a lot of canning; she also did smoking of fish and meat.<sup>699</sup>

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<sup>695</sup> Interview with Kathy Robinson, May 2009: p.4 of transcript; Kathy is over 80 years old, her detailed memories refer to events in the early part of the twentieth century.

<sup>696</sup> Ibid: p.4 of transcript.

<sup>697</sup> Tavia Grant in The Globe and Mail; Wednesday November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2011.

<sup>698</sup> Interview with Ina and Charlotte, May 2009: pp12-13; later she sold her sweaters all over the world.

<sup>699</sup> Interview with Charlotte: p.12; she learned the skills of fish preparation and smoking fish later.

The Nuu'Chah'Nulth, like other First Nations, now had to pay for food previously harvested from the sea, shore and forest, self-sufficiency becoming seriously curtailed. Charlotte epitomises those times, the strengths needed to overcome dependency on food-relief boats:

I don't think we ever did without. ... There was a period of time in the 1950s when a lot of people were relying very much on the government. Relief boats would come, loaded with canned food, people would come to rely on that to survive throughout the winter but our family didn't.<sup>700</sup>

After the tidal wave devastated the isolated communities along the west-coast, families moved into Port Alberni to find work, schools and housing, to try and rebuild a feeling of community. Again, this had a detrimental effect on the women who 'came into towns without children; they had a lot of loneliness and isolation in town. They didn't have a community to fall back on.' Children were left in residential schools while parents attempted to establish a life for themselves in towns and 'it took quite a few years for people to again find balance and stability.'<sup>701</sup> The tiny community of Zeballos<sup>702</sup> was wiped out and is still trying to establish itself as a functioning community. Part of the process has involved the inhabitants of Zeballos, and other remote townships, in workshops to give people the skills to be active participants in community re-building, in treaty negotiations, beneficial land deals and fishing rights.<sup>703</sup>

Isolation and the relative inaccessibility of the west-coast meant contact occurred at a later date than elsewhere in Canada but it was still traumatic and devastating to Nuu'Chah'Nulth society as a deeply Aboriginal land was reconstituted in European terms and European ways were imposed onto native space. According to Clifford,<sup>704</sup> the traditional cultures and artefacts of the people of the north-west were systematically exploited, repressed, and marginalised by the economies, laws and institutions of modern Canada. The unequal struggle over economic, cultural, and political power still continues but the people have not disappeared.<sup>705</sup> Traditions, homes, communities, and economies have changed and adapted to meet the demands of the twenty-first century, but people continue to resist the claims of a dominant white culture. Exploitation, substandard schools, inferior healthcare, limited job prospects persist in some areas but the resiliency of the people is strong and traditions continue. Many communities have survived and resisted or adapted to the impositions inflicted on them over the last two hundred years: 'devastating diseases, commercial and political

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<sup>700</sup> Ibid., p.5 of transcript.

<sup>701</sup> Ibid., p.10 of transcript.

<sup>702</sup> Zeballos is a small community on the west coast of Vancouver Island located at the end of a long inlet leading from Nootka Sound.

<sup>703</sup> The very first community workshop was held in Zeballos in April 2010; In May 2010 I was told feedback from the workshops and follow-up sessions was positive.

<sup>704</sup> Clifford, J. (1997) *Routes: Travel and Translation in the late Twentieth Century*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass

<sup>705</sup> Clifford, J. *Routes*, p.145.

damnation, suppression of the potlatch, forced compulsory education in residential schools' and drastic land reduction.<sup>706</sup>

Despite damage to their cultures, and continuing economic and political inequality, despite struggles over land claims and the repatriation of museum collections, many Nuuchah-Nulth women are finding the way to live separate from and in negotiation with modern Canada.<sup>707</sup> Over the last three decades, ways to give First Nations increasing jurisdiction over their affairs, ultimately phasing out the Department of Indian Affairs<sup>708</sup> and replacing it with two new entities, one focusing on relationships between First Nations and the Crown, the other continuing to provide services to Aboriginal people, have been considered. There is a push for more autonomy for Aboriginal people, more opportunities to build their own economies and less direct government intervention, an idea that sits well with Mr Harper's conservative government as it will mean fewer subsidies from Ottawa's monetary reserves. National Chief, Shawn Atleo has a vision: to foster a separate governance system for Canada's First Nations, a major step towards independence, so ending the paternalistic system that currently exists.<sup>709</sup>

On the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2011, at the Assembly of First Nations, Atleo made a bold call to repeal the Indian Act and abolish the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, and in the process forge a new deal. The series of patchwork amendments, since the enactment of the act in 1876, have not transformed the Indian Act into a sound edifice, and he believes First Nation communities would benefit from greater freedom and structure than the act currently provides. He is right in thinking change is needed but would the break-up of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs not result in a dangerous neglect of Aboriginal policy?<sup>710</sup> These statements were made at a pertinent time, a month after the Canadian Human Rights Act came into effect on First Nation Reserves, on June 18<sup>th</sup> 2011: an act affecting more than 633 First Nation communities, and more than 700,000 First Nation citizens who reside on the reserves. As yet, it is too early to predict the effect of this act on the people themselves.

On June 11<sup>th</sup> 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper had made a Statement of Apology to all former pupils of the residential school system, an apology meeting a luke-warm response from Nuuchah-Nulth women. The apology is central to their healing as it has brought issues to the forefront of women's minds, issues to be dealt with in personal healing and community rebuilding. A number of influential Aboriginal women responded to his apology, setting out what it means to be

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<sup>706</sup> Ibid., p.109.

<sup>707</sup> This is being accomplished through healing, re-vitalising traditional ways and education.

<sup>708</sup> Recently renamed the Department of Aboriginal Affairs by the federal government.

<sup>709</sup> Detail from 'First Nations chief wants to disband Aboriginal Affairs department' by Gloria Galloway, Globe and Mail update, July 12<sup>th</sup> 2011: Shawn Atleo thinks starting from scratch would be a major step on road to native independence; Shawn Atleo is Nuuchah-Nulth.

<sup>710</sup> National Chief Shawn Atleo makes bold call on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2011; reported in Globe and Mail.

both Aboriginal and female. Beverley Jacobs,<sup>711</sup> National President of the Native Women's Association of Canada, spoke eloquently about the strengths of Aboriginal women and their plight following years in residential schooling, and the effects of colonisation and assimilation.

Prior to the residential school system, prior to colonization, the women in our communities were very well respected and honoured for the role that they have in our communities. Women are the life givers, being the caretakers of the spirit that we bring into this world, Our Mother Earth. ... The government and churches' genocidal policies of the residential schools caused so much harm to that respect for women and to the way women were honoured in our communities. ... Despite the hardships, we have our language. We have our ceremonies. We have our elders. ... The decisions we make today will affect seven generations from now. ... We have had so much impact from colonization and that is what we are dealing with today. Women have taken the brunt of it all.<sup>712</sup>

Her words emphasise respect for Aboriginal women in Canada, the way women were honoured in their communities and families, and the respect women felt for themselves and each other, eroded due to government and church policies, resulting in the need for healing programmes to restore strengths and stability. It is a powerful speech offering hope for the future, for Aboriginal women in their efforts in community re-building, for the women themselves, and for younger Nuuchah-Nulth women to listen to and learn from the teachings of their Elders.

Patricia McGuire, in her article on 'Stories about Women'<sup>713</sup> wonders how negative attitudes towards and disrespect for women, a result of the residential school system and colonial teachings, permeates Aboriginal life today. It is certainly apparent in the women's narratives although they are firm in their conviction that strengths gained through personal healing will ensure 'respect for women' returns as at the heart of Nuuchah-Nulth teaching is the expectation people treat one another with honour and respect in all circumstances. The women I met strongly emphasised the continued importance of these attributes embedded in Nuuchah-Nulth life.

The technological age of the twenty-first century allowing worldwide communication, adds yet another aspect to discourse and documentary evidence in understanding Nuuchah-Nulth women's role and status in their communities: historical images, representations and debates on web-sites, in newsprint, in the media, and blogs.<sup>714</sup> Through the cultural media the past is being

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<sup>711</sup> Beverley Jacobs is the past President of the Native Women's Association of Canada (2004-2009); her statement/response to Harper's apology was originally published in Canadian Women's Studies/les cahiers de la femme, 'Indigenous Women in Canada: The Voices of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Women' 26(3&4) (Winter/Spring 2008): pp223-225; reprinted in Monture, P. A. & McGuire, P.D. (Eds.) *First Voices* pp11-14

<sup>712</sup> Monture & McGuire, *First Voices* pp11-12; the quote represents a part of Jacobs response to Harper's apology.

<sup>713</sup> Patricia D. McGuire 'Wiisaakodewikwe Anishinaabekwe Diabaajimotaw Nipigon Zaaga'igan: Lake Nipigon Ojibway Métis Stories about Women' in Monture, P.A. & McGuire, P.D. (Eds.)(2009) *First Voices* p.70.

<sup>714</sup> ActiveHistory.ca; (Re)imaging 9/11: A Reflection on Photographic Representation & the Politics of Memory; posted on the internet 12<sup>th</sup> September 2011, 02.30am PDT; IdleNoMore protest Movement begun in 2012

constantly re-imagined to a wider audience. Photographs are more than just pictorial evidence of past events and people as photographs speak to us, using a language understood by many and with which we are familiar. It becomes part of history to be able to photograph images, people and events. For those of us who have not lived through these specific historical events, we can only know about those happenings through another's representation or interpretation. What does the picture of Alice Paul tell us nearly one hundred years on?<sup>715</sup> Or is she just part of a larger collection of images of First Nation women amongst other photographs of Aboriginal people. Consider the possibility of viewing historical photographs alongside witness testimonies, families' oral histories, putting the photograph into context, and transferring private photographs into historical sites for the global viewing public on the internet. Such powerful actions will impact on each of us differently.

Documenting and interpreting First Nations history is a practical as well as a theoretical matter. Understanding Nuu'Chah'Nulth perspective requires looking beyond reliable historical accounts derived from the written word, and challenged by comparing oral stories with paper accounts as historical stories or facts survive in both formats. The stories emerging from these interviews attest to being an extremely valuable source of historical evidence as well as giving extraordinary detailed information about the women, as well as placing the stories within specific historical locations: the 1964 tidal wave, the opening of residential schools, the arrival of settlers, the coming of government food-relief boat, how these events affected and changed women's lives.

The influences changing the roles of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, how their world changed dramatically and radically, are clearly reflected in the following words:

Each person from a very ... very tiny child to elders had roles, even before they were born. Some were born to that role and for others, the strength from within. They would come forward and be recognised, and their role would come from that – there were canoeists, there were builders, there were women who were very good at weaving and the weaving of clothes, and the harvesting of food, and there was so much protocol to follow; it was a very fine tuned governance system. Then all of a sudden people from another world came with such different ways, different ways of doing, and very different thoughts of how life is and they have come from a place where you have no idea or concept of what it is. They have a strong influence and there are changes, change in diet and behaviour and diseases.<sup>716</sup>

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among the Aboriginal people of Canada, inspired by the liquid-diet hunger strike of Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence: ActiveHistory.ca June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2013.

<sup>715</sup> For discussion on Alice Paul, Nuu'Chah'Nulth Elder, see chapter 5.

<sup>716</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.5 of transcript.

# Chapter Seven: Women's Role and Traditional Knowledge

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The strength of who we were has always been there, now we can pick up the tools of today, and take our beliefs and values of who we are that's threaded in us and move forward. ... I think it offers an opportunity for us to be absolutely everything we were meant to be, to move forward in a good way.<sup>717</sup>

These words epitomise the stated role and position of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, and who they want to be in the twenty-first century, mirroring their understanding of women's traditional roles, their strengths, skills, and knowledge. In earlier Nuu'Chah'Nulth society, the traditional roles of women and men were balanced and secure allowing women not only safety but also a powerful place within those communities. At the beginning of the twentieth century in this complementary society,

...there was equality or balance within the structure of the community and families ... humility and respect, no-one being any greater than somebody else.<sup>718</sup> In Grandma's day there were gender responsibilities, the genders took responsibility and did the things they were supposed to do ... being responsible to the family and the community, maintaining the balance ... in my grandmother's day they were keeping gender stuff in balance so there wasn't a problem.<sup>719</sup>

Equality was accepted as the norm, and, although roles and responsibilities were different, both are needed for the survival of the community; there was an essential necessary balance for meeting the physical and spiritual needs of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth people.<sup>720</sup> While men, in the main, held political office, women were honoured, and highly respected for their invaluable contribution to the survival of the nation, for their place as mothers, as grandmothers, sisters, wives, and aunts, as providers and weavers, and as keepers of knowledge, culture, traditions, and language. As many earlier communities were both matriarchal and matrilineal, women's authority and rightful place was ensured. Even if First Nations society was patriarchal in structure, like that of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, women were recognised and placed in high esteem as the hunter/gatherer society considered women to be an essential and valued economic partner in the various work activities associated with each seasonal cycle. It was a partnership.

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<sup>717</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.15 of transcript.

<sup>718</sup> Interview with Anne Robinson, May 2009: p.10 of transcript.

<sup>719</sup> Ibid., p.15 of transcript.

<sup>720</sup> The notion of 'equality' between women and men is foreign to some aboriginal groups and invokes issues and/or debates concerning gender roles. Accordingly, men belonged to the outside world (as hunters and providers), and women, in contrast, belonged to the household, and although this does suggest limitations of women's positions to a Euro-American this is certainly something not felt or even apparent in Nuu'Chah'Nulth society. See Interview with Jackie Watts: p.5.

In the nineteenth century, women each had their own roles; and even though we were patriarchal the men still highly respected the women. You couldn't even have a village that folks didn't respect each other; everyone had equal status.<sup>721</sup>

A woman had her responsibilities, the house, raising the children, looking after things; she was the woodcutter, cutting the wood, hacking wood, looking after the woodpile, digging for clams, digging for everything from the ocean. They would bring it all in as men were out fishing and trapping. They had no-one else so they had to go out and collect for everybody. When [the men came in] they would hit the side of the canoe and women came down with their bags and baskets, whatever they needed; they shared everything with each other, whatever they had. It's mostly women and children in the community.<sup>722</sup>

As these remarks suggest, women's and men's roles were complimentary, both necessary for progress and survival. More importantly, women's views and decisions were honoured, their knowledge valued and appreciated, as people believed the community would die if women were not accorded respect.<sup>723</sup> Within society as a whole, it was believed women had sacred gifts as life-givers and caretakers, mothers and nurturers, transferring knowledge from one generation to the next so each subsequent generation is strengthened.<sup>724</sup> At the centre of Nuuchah'Nulth society was an expectation people would treat each other with honour and respect, valuing everyone's contribution to the community, and this understanding was a continuing source of strength and peace for their society.<sup>725</sup>

We have had that power for a long, long time. It was our role in our communities. I think it has been something passed from generation to generation quietly realising what our roles are.<sup>726</sup>

The role of women in traditional Aboriginal societies has been one of the most impacted upon as a result of colonisation processes. Women were largely ignored and forgotten, their knowledge and contributions to sustainability devalued by the impositions of a colonial society. Residential schooling, the Indian Act, and assimilation sought to destroy language, traditions, culture, and respect, but has this actually happened? Has women's knowledge, their contributions to society been destroyed? Has tradition disappeared? Or has it changed? Over the next few pages, excerpts from Nuuchah'Nulth women's narratives will show the breadth and depth of their roles and

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<sup>721</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.6 of transcript.

<sup>722</sup> Interview with Kathy Robinson, May 2009: p.3 of transcript.

<sup>723</sup> Excellent sources of reading include: Miller & Chuchryk *Women of the First Nations*; Mihesuah, D.A. (2003) *Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism*, University of Nebraska Press, Bison Books; Hoy, H. (2001) *How Should I Read These? Native Women Writers in Canada*, University of Toronto Press; Rosaldo, M.Z. & Lamphere, L. (Eds.) (1974) *Women, Culture, & Society*, Stanford University Press; Bataille, G. & Sands, K. (1984) *American Indian Women Telling Their Lives*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln

<sup>724</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.4 of transcript; interview with Ina and Charlotte, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.21 of transcript; both interviews took place in Port Alberni.

<sup>725</sup> Valaskakis, G. G., Dion Stout, M. & Guimond, E. *Restoring the Balance*; Monture, P. & McGuire, P. *First Voices*; Battiste, M. (Ed.) (2000) *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver.

<sup>726</sup> Interview with Ina and Charlotte, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.1 of transcript.

responsibilities, their strengths and power that has persisted, despite a hostile environment, skills Nuu'Chah'Nulth women have adapted to suit the technological advancements of the twenty-first century, and knowledge the women are in the process of transferring to younger generations.

We teach the younger generations about our resources, we can teach them how to look after the resources, to gather sea foods from the rocks; I can show them all the shrubs, roots and berries, where they are and how to preserve them.<sup>727</sup>

These comments are corroborated by others. When talking about her grandmother, Jackie speaks enthusiastically about transference of skills, skills so much easier to learn now due to the technologies of pressure cookers, electricity, and modern plumbing.

She taught me how to pick some traditional medicines; I can pass those things onto my daughter. I have a cousin who still knows how to pick some of the same medicines, and how to smoke fish, and she does that as a business. She smokes fish, cans fish, and sells it.<sup>728</sup>

Women and men formed a true partnership with neither having more power than the other, a balance that was mutually beneficial and dependent on each other,<sup>729</sup> and reinforced in traditional stories. The balance of roles and responsibilities within this complimentary, this egalitarian society changed with the arrival of European settlement.

Three generations ago, before the advent of non-aboriginal people and modern technologies, the 'Nuu'Chah'Nulth people were brilliant in relation to their existence ...in each having a role and a responsibility within the community',<sup>730</sup> with each individual connected to their family and the wider community, with everyone working for the common goal of sustaining the community. The analogy of a canoe is used to explain this community balance:

...in order for that canoe to move forward, you needed all the paddles to be balanced, to be strong ... so that each person from a very, very tiny baby to elders had roles.<sup>731</sup>

The system recognised some people were born with their roles already identified and defined whereas, for others, the strength would come from within and would be recognised and acknowledged at some later point in their lives. Individual roles for women and men developed in harmony as 'it was a very fine tuned governance system.'<sup>732</sup>

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<sup>727</sup> Interview with Delores Bayne, 29<sup>th</sup> April 2010: p.6 of transcript.

<sup>728</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.24 of transcript.

<sup>729</sup> Story from Aboriginal Worldview from the Gwich'in, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2011, by Cath Oberholtzer, Professor of Anthropology: The man collects the wood bending it to form the frame for snowshoes. He also hunts and kills the moose, the tendons of which are used as laces. The woman strips the tendons to lace the snowshoes. He must select the best wood for the frames; she must ensure that the lacing is excellent as their very lives depend on snowshoes. She must know how to do this as their survival depends on him having the proper snowshoes to hunt in so he can catch and procure the food. Each depends on and is mutually beneficial to the other.

<sup>730</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.5 of transcript.

<sup>731</sup> Ibid., p.5 of transcript.

<sup>732</sup> Ibid., p.5 of transcript; the interview describes the people who helped ensure balance – the weavers, canoeists, builders, hunter/gatherers.



The 'canoe' analogy is further strengthened:

I think all Nuu'Chah'Nulth are in that canoe, all Nuu'Chah'Nulth are within their canoe. ... That canoe might not, at this time, be running as smoothly as it possibly can but it is moving, in some instances it is at a snail's pace and in others it is huge.<sup>733</sup>

The transference of skills and knowledge between generations is an important feature of this forward movement. Eileen has already begun this process with her daughters, explaining how specific skills and knowledge are transmitted, recognising points of readiness:

I can't begin to tell you everything that has been passed down: everything that I am is part of that ... but all the other strong women in my family, my extended family, my community, some of the elders continue to advise me, to guide me, to pass onto me what is necessary for me to pass on. Soon I'll be in that realm where they call me elder; I don't think it's an age so much as when you're at that point of readiness beginning to pass on all that you have accumulated and drawn from so many ... now it's your turn. The strength of who we were has always been there, now we can pick up the tools of today and take the beliefs and values of who we are that is threaded in who we are and move forward. ... the recapturing of our language, at the moment, is an intricate part of our language development in our community.<sup>734</sup>

Generations of women were raised to work, 'to be the workers for the tribe, to work for the people, to work for the chiefs as it was the proper way of doing things, the respectful way, keeping everything in order' and balanced.<sup>735</sup>

Within this group of women one was told she would be an anchor for the tribe, the spokesperson, as the Tseshaht would need her stability to safeguard the continuity of Nuu'Chah'Nulth people. Through their grandmothers' teachings, women are preparing for their eventual roles in the communities, whether as health visitors, educators and teachers, story-tellers, or community workers and drug councillors, knowing it is women who have strong minds, who understand 'every person has something important to do, to offer to their family and their community; no-one was ever more important than anyone else.'<sup>736</sup> The only person who had elevated status was the hawiih, the chief, although the chief was nothing without the people.

[There was] equality and balance within the structure of the community and families as to humility and respect with no-one being any greater than somebody else ...wheels within wheels.<sup>737</sup>

It has been said the 'voices of women are varied and very instrumental in what happens in the communities and families.'<sup>738</sup> These women were concerned about the uncertainty other women

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<sup>733</sup> Ibid., p.15 of transcript.

<sup>734</sup> Ibid., pp.15-16 of transcript.

<sup>735</sup> Interview with Anne Robinson, May 6<sup>th</sup> 2009: p.1 of transcript.

<sup>736</sup> Ibid., p.10 of transcript; see Voyager, C. (2008) *Firekeepers of the Twenty-first Century: First Nations Women Chiefs*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal.

<sup>737</sup> Interview with Anne Robinson: p.10 of transcript.

<sup>738</sup> Interview with Ina and Charlotte, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.1 of transcript.

felt nowadays about their role, how women should behave in the communities, an understanding known through past generations but had been fractured through residential schooling. Women's voices had been stilled and quieted. Now, through the advent of education and community development programmes, schooling and higher education, women are finding their voice, to become advocates for other women. The advent of the internet has been critical in getting women's voice onto the airwaves, reaching out to a wide audience, impossible in the past, as witnessed last autumn when Michelle Obama's speech received more online viewing than the entire Republican National Convention.<sup>739</sup>

Women's roles and responsibilities are changing and expanding, embracing the family and community; responsibilities have become broader covering a wider geographical area, dealing with dispersed and extensive families across countryside and town.

Yes, it has changed; we are now in cities, we are not only out there in the communities, we go out there for our jobs so it's a different role now; it has become broader. For our mothers and grandmothers, their world was their children's that was their world; it wasn't as broad. Now we know practically every family in all the fourteen nations and so our roles have changed tremendously.<sup>740</sup>

These women have become advocates for women with no voice, to be the 'spokesperson for the family and the community, to have a commitment to the people in the community, to be an advocate for those people who have no voice; to find a system to help women to find their voice,'<sup>741</sup> ensuring all women have the opportunity and skills to be an integral part of this process. These educated women realise they have a greater role in ensuring *all* women have a voice, a role previously held by their mothers and grandmothers: 'Our mother was the voice.'<sup>742</sup>

An Elder, who has since died, was a passionate advocate for women: she was a strong speaker, used to teaching and speaking in front of large audiences. When asked by a young lady in a secondary school how she would like to be referred to (as this leadership student was going to introduce the elder to the class), the Elder replied:

"In my day I have been an aboriginal, I've been an Indian, I've been a First Nations, and I've been pretty well everything around the block. But I know who I am. It doesn't really matter what I'm called, it is who I am that really matters; it is who I am that counts."<sup>743</sup>

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<sup>739</sup> See <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jjcolao/2012/09/07/michelle-obamas-speech-gets-more-online-views-than-the-entire-mc/> Michelle Obama's speech 7<sup>th</sup> September 2012; see also 'A testament to tenacity: cultural persistence in the letters and speeches of eastern Band Cherokee women', PhD thesis written by Virginia Moore Carney, 2000, University of Kentucky; Sojourner Truth's *Ar'n't I a woman*, words spoken at a women's rights convention in 1851.

<sup>740</sup> Interview with Ina and Charlotte: p.8 of transcript.

<sup>741</sup> Ibid., pp2-3 of transcript.

<sup>742</sup> Ibid., p.16 of transcript.

<sup>743</sup> Story recounted by Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.1 of transcript; see also books by Julie Cruikshank.

This statement sends a strong message to all young Nuu'Chah'Nulth women. For these women, it is essential women's voices are heard so they constantly stressed the need to:

Let the world know [women] have been here all along, we have been strong; we're waiting for the world to hear us. ... We want our new generations to hear us too,<sup>744</sup> [and augmented in the following]: the voice from within started to surface and contributed to the great changes.<sup>745</sup>

We are seeing women are not reclaiming, they are bringing the voice from within forward and quietly asserting that strength.<sup>746</sup>

Emphasis on strengths and women's voice is a strong feature throughout the interviews, sentiments constantly reinforced, strengths found not only amongst Nuu'Chah'Nulth women but embraced by all Aboriginal women:

Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, Aboriginal women, have such strength and endurance, and visionary ... those very strong foundations ... so many writings are focused on the male and very few writings reflect on the women, very few writings bring forward the women's voice. It is to do with balancing, with balancing of voice.<sup>747</sup>

In her book *Daughter of the Dreaming*,<sup>748</sup> Diane Bell describes in detail the degree to which women have autonomy, power and control over their lives and the specific ways in which ritual and traditional ways preserve these strengths in everyday life. Her important study, although it is now thirty years since it was written, still influences our understanding of women's lives in Aboriginal society. It is very evident from the narratives Nuu'Chah'Nulth women are keen to reveal and express their desire to publicise the strengths of their role and status within their communities to as wide an audience as possible, one of the main reasons they were happy and willing to talk to me. One of the most telling statements was the comment: "They've sent you to us for a reason. You have been sent to listen to us and hear our stories."<sup>749</sup> Another woman concurred:

"They're the ones who brought you here ... it's not purely intellectual, it's not purely academic, it's also spiritual. There's a spiritual aspect that brought you here; it's the wholeness of the spirit."<sup>750</sup>

I felt honoured for a number of reasons: to have been given the opportunity to listen to these women, to be trusted in that listening process, the belief that I, as an outsider, had the skills to deliver their thoughts and stories, to write about women's strengths, to empathise, the reasons appear to be endless. Likewise, Bell's book is remarkable as she writes from the position of an

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<sup>744</sup> Interview with Delores Bayne, 29<sup>th</sup> April 2010: p.18 of transcript, the end of the interview.

<sup>745</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.11 of transcript.

<sup>746</sup> Ibid., p.2 of transcript.

<sup>747</sup> Ibid., p.2 of transcript.

<sup>748</sup> Bell, Diane (1983) *Daughters of the Dreaming*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, Australia; her book refers to Aboriginal women in Australia; an important study that contributes greatly to white Australian understanding of Aboriginal women's tribal life.

<sup>749</sup> Interview with Louise, 30<sup>th</sup> April 2010: p.7 of transcript.

<sup>750</sup> Interview with Anne Robinson, May 2009: p.12 of transcript.

outsider: she is a white anthropologist, winning the trust of the women with whom she lived and worked sufficiently to be permitted to record and publish her knowledge, reasons essential to her understanding of Aboriginal women's lives, and for being allowed to include autobiographical fragments throughout her writing. Through her words, it becomes clear that within Aboriginal cultures telling one's own story is a very complicated process, often controlled by traditional constraints as first-hand narratives have great authenticity when delivered and confirmed communally. Bell explains:

Story-telling is a group activity: the presence and assistance of an audience ensures that there will always be a number of persons to bear witness to the content of the story.<sup>751</sup> Stories connect women producing common identities so the tales recounted by women bond them to each other, to their families and communities, and to other Aboriginal groups in the wider world: stories also connect women to their spiritual and mythic dimension as they 'open a door to the next world.'<sup>752</sup> Hearing women's stories could be deemed to be the beginning of establishing sound relationships and extending family connections within Nuuch'at'ulth communities. Yukon elder and story-teller, Angela Sidney<sup>753</sup> thinks about and processes information with reference to narratives, organising, and transmitting her insights and knowledge of her world through story and song, describing human conditions that intersect with and reinforce each other.

These narratives, a repertoire of stories, teach what to value and what to ignore. As stories could be considered to be the source of all values, she says: "I want to live my life right, just like a story."<sup>754</sup> Likewise, Therese Remy-Sawyer, a Gwich'in Elder, emphasises the strength and importance of stories and story-telling:

I grew up amongst elders, stories and nature. Our culture comes alive through stories. Because of our stories you know who you are. In the Gwich'in traditional way, the grandparent or parent gives each child the gift of many stories, creating an unbreakable bond.<sup>755</sup>

These sentiments are reflected in the following when Eileen remembers a story told by her chief:

I remember him telling me about what he had been taught when he was young. He was gifting me with this story. He says: "Always remember whatever comes upon us, whatever comes out of your mouth ... it goes up to those mountains and this valley is surrounded by

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<sup>751</sup> Bell *Daughters of the Dreaming* p.44.

<sup>752</sup> Frank, A.W. (2010) *letting stories breathe: a socio-narratology* The University of Chicago Press, p.46

<sup>753</sup> Angela Sidney, a Yukon elder; her story has been transcribed and discussed in Julie Cruikshank *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Native Elders, Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith, and Annie Ned*, University of Nebraska Press, 1990.

<sup>754</sup> Frank, A.W. *letting stories breathe*, p.69; see also Cruikshank, J. (1998) *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory*, University of Nebraska Press pp.43-44: she discusses thinking with stories on pages 39-43; and Cruikshank, J. *Life Lived Like a Story* *ibid*; Goodman, L.J. & Swan, H. *Singing the Songs of My Ancestors*; Hungry Wolf, B. (1982) *The Ways of My Grandmothers*, Quill, New York

<sup>755</sup> Remy-Sawyer, T. (2009) *Living in Two Worlds: A Gwich'in Woman tells her True Story, Native of the Northwest Territories*, Trafford Publishing, Victoria; p.xi.

mountains; those words go up to those mountains and they bounce right back; so if you're giving out negative and harsh words, it goes up and comes back and it's who you are. If you are giving out goodness that goes up and comes back, that is who you are."

My dad said to me: "Whatever comes out of your mouth, no matter that you say you're sorry, it's out, it's gone, it has been shared with someone else, you can never take it back, so think before you say anything." These little things you try to pass on they are really important for how you conduct yourself, how you walk in life.<sup>756</sup>

Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, whilst recounting their tales and life experiences, show in the setting and telling of their stories how values are explained, explored, and defined; stories remind us who we are and where we belong, that through story-telling, stories have power. Different stories of the same event emerge and it is these differing versions of the same story that tell us about values.

Bruner suggests stories guide our thinking as people think with and through stories, and everything becomes 'real' because people are caught up in stories.<sup>757</sup> Jo-Ann Archibald, a First Nation educator, describes, during a workshop with First Nation student teachers, how stories take on a life and become the teacher.<sup>758</sup> Stories represent boundaries to our thinking shaping our moral development, so it is suggested by Bruner stories provide, for people, their first system for thinking.<sup>759</sup> The women recount stories from the past, illustrating their strengths and power, a historical narrative underlying the 'displacement of oral culture by a bureaucratic culture based on written records.'<sup>760</sup> Women's narratives demonstrate a desire to work with families and communities for change. Nuu'Chah'Nulth women could not, and cannot, exist without their stories, their importance constantly stressed. Kathy explains:

...a lot of stories are teaching stories as that is how they made us understand things, how to do things, how to respect people, what not to do, don't hurt other people's children or their girls. They were quite forward about saying what they wanted to do, what they wanted.

There was no vulgarity the women came right to the point of what they are saying.<sup>761</sup>

Nuu'Chah'Nulth traditions are handed down through stories, orally from generation to generation, teaching the people many useful life-practices.<sup>762</sup> Telling stories helps to preserve and explain the narratives and traditions of their ancestors, the histories of their people. Ritual of story-telling was,

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<sup>756</sup> Interview with Eileen, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.13 of transcript.

<sup>757</sup> Frank, A.W. *letting stories breathe*, p.46; Bruner, J. (2002) *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, NY: p.34.

<sup>758</sup> Jo-Ann Archibald uses fables to explore strengths of stories, how stories can take care of you during stressful times of your life, ideas explored further in her book *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit*, (2008) University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver; see also Kovach, M. (2009) *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*, University of Toronto Press: Chapter 5, Story as Indigenous Methodology: pp.94-108.

<sup>759</sup> Bruner, J. (2002) *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York: p.34.

<sup>760</sup> Frank, A.W. *letting stories breathe*, p.80.

<sup>761</sup> Interview with Kathy Robinson, May 2009: p.11 of transcript.

<sup>762</sup> The Nuu'Chah'Nulth different perceptions of time and the living world place their tales at another level of reality, one that is distinctive from a world with which we are familiar. The myths and stories about their history, depicting both animal and human worlds, are many and varied; See Sapir's Nootka Tales.

and still is, entrenched in everyday life. "It was usually my grandmother who would tell stories she was a great story-teller," says Jackie.<sup>763</sup>

Stories emphasise and confirm the people's fundamental regard for, and attachment to, the land and sea as the Nuu'Chah'Nulth believe everything is interconnected and inter-related, an axiom embedded in their stories. Young children listen to these stories, such as 'How the Son of Raven Captured the Day', stories about pitch or snot woman stealing little children, stories about Thunderbird, the whales and the whalers, stories spanning life from birth to death focusing upon the important moments of life: birth, naming, puberty, marriage, and death.<sup>764</sup> The content of each story is relevant to the age of the child giving meaning to and helping to understand these momentous times. Jackie explains her experience of growing up through the medium of story-telling.

My grandmother was a great story-teller and so was my grandfather; they would tell stories and very often they would include wildlife and supernatural beings; throughout these stories you would tell them appropriately, so age appropriate and as you got older the story would become much more articulate and more in depth and much more ... much more graphic so it would have to do with life cycles. All the stories would have to do with right from being born and traditional ceremonies. ... They have us singing and dancing and at the ceremony they all spoke all kinds of languages that were passed around. ... My grandmother and all her relations and friends get together and decide on all the names, those names that take us throughout our lives so now we become women. Being held up means becoming one with the utmost respect because you will bring life ... so story-telling is usually about life and myths and legends.<sup>765</sup>

Stories told in the oral tradition 'provide a sense of identity and belonging, situating community members within their lineage and establishing their relationship to the rest of the world.'<sup>766</sup>

Through the processes of story-telling, food preparation and communality women gained knowledge, respect, status, their lives acquiring meaning and shape, celebrating aspects of their world; and it was this secure power base that was lost when residential schooling fragmented families. While it is difficult for an 'outsider' to understand the enormity of the changes occurring in communities and families, and to women's status, Bell's account gives an insight into the history, attempting to make sense of the dramatic changes of the past century: 'the past has been encapsulated in the present, the present permeates the past.'<sup>767</sup> These autobiographical stories of women's lives display a quality of telling, at times interweaving with community stories, their memories flowing into each other, often repetitive, giving a strength and substance to stories

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<sup>763</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009: p.9 of transcript; see fn776.

<sup>764</sup> The books of Dr George Cutesi, *Son of Raven*, *Son of Deer*, tell of common fables passed down through the generations.

<sup>765</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009: pp.9-10 of transcript.

<sup>766</sup> Native scholar Angela Cavender Wilson 'American Indian History or Non-Indian Perceptions of American Indian History?' in Mihesuah, Devon A. (Ed.)(1999) *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln; p.24.

<sup>767</sup> Bell *daughters of the dreaming*, p.46.

recounted across generations, all contributing to an understanding that is both distinct and separate, with no person isolated from the group of women and their deeply interconnecting traditions: Tsawalk – everything is one, an interconnectedness of families, communities, women and stories, a mesh of ‘stories, rituals and history-laden landmarks.’<sup>768</sup> Personal stories are interspersed with community tales, constantly replenishing and reinforcing the essentially common pool of stories, tales and legends passing from generation to generation, from elder to grandchild, woman to woman. The idea of autobiography is not an individual activity in Nuu’Chah’Nulth society so it is difficult, maybe impossible, to think of individual activities standing alone in traditional Nuu’Chah’Nulth communities. Stories include wildlife and supernatural beings but, whatever the theme, all stories are age-related. As a child grew older stories become more graphic, more articulate, and more in-depth; stories relating to life-cycles from birth to death, traditional ceremonies, and morals.<sup>769</sup> There are morals within stories there is balance between ideas, between the purpose and the outcome of the story. Songs and stories are essentially personal but change and evolve in the retelling, becoming a recurring activity carefully interwoven into Nuu’Chah’Nulth ritual and ceremony. There are points of separation where women, aunties, mothers, and grandmothers come together and speak separately to the girls, explaining expectations. Story-telling occurred naturally whenever an opportunity arose with many variations surrounding one theme; take, for instance, the communal water-tap. Women use the daily occasion of collecting water from a spring or water-tap to tell stories, to pass on and collect information, to talk together, to share ideas, to exchange news. With laughter in their voices Ina and Charlotte explain the ‘water tap routine’.

When we were younger we did not have electricity, we didn’t have running water in our houses; for water we had to go to a community tap and had to rely on getting our water that way which was good too because we could also hear all the women talking and hear all the gossip from the community happenings; and if you were really quiet you would hear the women talking and telling stories.<sup>770</sup>

A few simple sentences give us a wealth of information about women’s lives. As children growing up in the 1940s and 1950s, many of these women had lived in isolated communities without electricity or running water in their homes, and their stories stress the communality of their lives, the strengths women give to women and children while husbands and fathers were away fishing and hunting; it

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<sup>768</sup> Longley, K.O. ‘Autobiographical Storytelling by Australian Aboriginal Woman’ in Smith, S. & Watson, J. (Eds.)(1992) *DeColonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women’s Autobiography*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis: pp370-384; see also P. Brock (Ed.)(1989) *Women, Rites and Sites: Aboriginal Women’s Cultural Knowledge*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney; for a discussion of change in Aboriginal women’s roles since European settlement see Gale, F. (Ed.)(1983) *We are Bosses Ourselves*, Australian Institute for Aboriginal Studies, Canberra.

<sup>769</sup> Detail from Jackie Watts, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009: pp9-11; the ceremonies included coming of age, naming, first hair cutting, belly-button ceremony etc.

<sup>770</sup> Interview with Ina and Charlotte, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.7 of transcript.

was a woman's world. It was grandmother who taught young girls how to prepare and smoke fish, how to weave while at the same time introducing girls to the sacred teachings.

Being in the forests presented ideal opportunities for teaching (often through stories) children who walked with the women to collect water, berries for sustenance, or grasses and wood for weaving. *Ha-huu-pa* (teachings) took place at any time or anywhere. Grandmothers and aunts explained the fauna and flora, the territories they were walking in, who owned it and, maybe more importantly, stories of how that territory came to be in a family's possession, and the strict protocols governing usage of resources.<sup>771</sup> The women protected children from danger, praising and encouraging, making sure children listened and learned in a stimulating environment, teaching children about right and wrong. The women remembered these outings, now realising the importance of these events and the information shared: "I would find out about these things on a stroll with my aunt or whoever: 'you can eat this, you can eat that but you can't eat that.'"<sup>772</sup> The habit of walking and talking, ensuring all children listen and be aware of what is happening around them is explicitly explained:

...the women would always be in the back, it was just another teaching time; and the grannies would be in the back watching, talking, and walking slow because the little ones are lagging behind. ... They wanted to run and play. The grannies would stop every time a child stopped. They didn't say 'hurry up' they would wait until that child followed the others. That was the teaching: you never ever let a child go behind you ... because in that instant a cougar could just grab a child, silently because they know how to do that. And it has happened in these past years. The teachings from the grannies to the older ones 'don't keep walking like this and talking. Always turn around and look around like this then the wildlife can see you're aware.'<sup>773</sup>

This story raises questions for me: who was the child in the story, who was the granny? Was this Nuu'Chah'Nulth woman talking about herself or her grandmother? This particular story is reinforced by another, telling of her time spent with her mother and grandmother:

She would keep me along the roadside and she would teach me about each of the berries and what not. ... There was [information] in relation to the berries and to the wild animals of the forest; they would teach me about respect and what they were like and what you could learn from them, the animals. That was all part of growing up.<sup>774</sup>

It is very easy to make similar comparisons with families today when young mothers and children cross roads; the cougar becomes the car. Care and protection of the young is a strong element of Nuu'Chah'Nulth life. Stories are told to children to make them think although it depends on the age

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<sup>771</sup> Corfield, M. MA thesis, August 2002.

<sup>772</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.6 of transcript.

<sup>773</sup> Interview with Delores Bayne, 29<sup>th</sup> April 2010: p.16: This was a wonderful interview; she enjoyed talking to me, she had many tales to tell and information to give however she is not clear in the telling of this tale whether or not she was the granny, or whether the tale came from her childhood.

<sup>774</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.6 of transcript.



of the child as to which parts of the story are shared. Understandably, there is more detail for older children. The theme of one particular story, 'Not Speaking to Strangers', was explained in great detail and involves an old lady, morals and values, plus an element of cannibalism.<sup>775</sup> Children listen to stories, songs and chants from the moment they are born: 'lullabies were sung to new-borns as the Nu'u'Chah'Nulth believe children are always gifts from the creator.'<sup>776</sup>

At a recent potlatch, when it became very apparent songs as well as stories were needed, a young girl 'got up and sang a song, a woman's song that came from her grandmother.' She was eight years old, and, despite the efforts of residential schooling to stop children from speaking their own language, she sang in Nu'u'Chah'Nulth:

...they had tried so hard to take our language away and yet it is still there; they really had taken so much from us but they did not take it all away and here is this child [our granddaughter] and she is singing in our language and singing our songs. ... Look how powerful she is.<sup>777</sup>

Although it is a rare occurrence nowadays, women have always chanted at the beginning of a Nu'u'Chah'Nulth potlatch. Recently, one of the Nations decided to reinstate women's chanting, to 'show what was historically done, to bring it back, and to recognise it was the ladies that held that role in their community.' Women are being encouraged to chant again, 'to bring their voices forward.'<sup>778</sup>

When they visit and are guests in other events, twenty years ago you would not have seen that but now ... I think Nu'u'Chah'Nulth women, the ladies, historically they were modest ladies. I think they are empowering their daughters and their granddaughters; they are giving them the strength and a strong sense of who they are and their role in life. ... I have a daughter and my daughter very much stands forward and she is strong. She is culturally strong. She is a strong speaker. Whenever she has children and whenever her brother has children, she will be a strong mentor for those children. She is already a strong mentor for her cousins and her nieces and nephews from our extended family. I like to think it is because for all her life I have instilled that within her and in a quiet sense.<sup>779</sup>

Grandparents and the elder women were motivated and energetic in keeping communities together, even during the time when ceremonies and potlatches were banned. Enthusiastically, I was told:

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<sup>775</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: pp10-11, 14-15 of transcript details the 'Gum witch lady' (Snot Lady) story, a cannibal who tempts all the children from the village down to the beach so families could not carry-on their traditions, ceremonies; a message to children of not talking to strangers/ladies no matter how old they are or what they look like.

<sup>776</sup> Ibid., p.12 of transcript.

<sup>777</sup> Interview with Ina and Charlotte, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.18 of transcript; people own their own songs; they are very personal and are passed down through the family. Songs belong to families and communities; there are strict protocols in relation to songs. See also interview with Genevieve, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010.

<sup>778</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.3 of transcript: Twenty years ago this would not have been seen or heard in Nu'u'Chah'Nulth tribal areas. The women were not ready to stand up and be seen and heard; often, they were going through their own personal healing process.

<sup>779</sup> Ibid., p.3 of transcript; reference to 'modesty' and 'modest', see Chapter Three.

[Women were] dynamic in pulling other community members together. Every Wednesday night we would have a potluck and they would say we're going to sing and dance to celebrate our lives through songs and dances. They were a part of that community that wanted to keep the language and culture and dance going.<sup>780</sup>

The dances and songs of winter ceremonials sustain all human life, reaffirming the relationship between families and ancestors. Music and songs are owned by individuals or families, and, in the past, were used to reinforce rank, status, and privilege. Songs belong to families and communities, and a song distinguishes its owner from other Nuu'Chah'Nulth families; a complex system of unwritten rules governs both songs and their owners, rules learned and followed, to honour and respect family, and preserve tradition. Songs are transferred to other family members at potlatches hosted by the current song owner.

Within a traditionally oral society, the strict ritual of transference and perpetuation eliminates potential confusion and responsibilities over song ownership rights: the 'giving of gifts, *p'acil*, to the guests who witnessed the transfer, was the final seal of the transaction.'<sup>781</sup> Genevieve talked about the time she received her song and the protocol surrounding this event agreeing songs stay in the family and are passed through generations:

I chant it; it is a potlatch song, a wolf society song. I used to know all the songs and I would sing to my grandchildren and teach my grandchildren the songs. My oldest son and his son went to a potlatch in the States recently and this group of men started singing. He said very loud "Ma, how come they're singing Grandpa's whale song?" He had recognised the song.<sup>782</sup> The men stopped singing and left; the song did not belong to them. The songs in Genevieve's family have been owned by them for a long time, and she is proud of her lineage. In response to a question about respecting ownership of family songs and dances, she said:

...my great-grandmother was a really powerful woman; she was a leader; she taught us how to dance; she was a composer and a singer. She knew how to sing, to chant, and some of the songs she composed are used for our entertainment. She owned all kinds of chants and songs, from the wolf society, thunderbird chants and hummingbird chants, and we still use them today.<sup>783</sup>

When the chiefs asked her to dance at a recent potlatch, Genevieve danced, she is proud to do so; she does not sit back and watch:

I used to dance every dance but then I didn't know the meaning of it till my grandmother sat me down and said; 'You represent this tribe, the tribe you dance for, or your family, you can

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<sup>780</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.23 of transcript.

<sup>781</sup> Goodman, L.J. & Swan, H. *Singing the Songs of my Ancestors*: pp41-42; According to Helma Swan, the Makah word *p'a* means 'to throw', and *p'acil* means 'to throw gifts'. The Makah/Nuu'Chah'Nulth speak of this activity as the 'giving of gifts' at a potlatch; the gifts could be payments for services rendered, such as witnessing events at potlatch ceremonies, being a witness, and passing on information. Traditional song ownership was a serious undertaking.

<sup>782</sup> Interview with Genevieve, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010: p.20 of transcript.

<sup>783</sup> Ibid., p.18 of transcript.

dance for them'; my grandmother was the one who had all the knowledge and the history, and she passed down the history, our lineage, our genealogy.<sup>784</sup> Generations of knowledge are represented in these dances, songs, and chants and Genevieve recognises her responsibility in continuing the tradition of transferring knowledge to the younger generation, an undertaking she is more than willing to maintain.

There are distinct songs for the different stages of life, so songs are sung depending on the ceremony. Women have their own songs and dances, and there are strict protocols in relation to these songs. When a daughter comes of age, a new song is created for that specific purpose; she now owns that song, it is her property, and you would need to ask permission from her, as the owner, to use the song. A new song was created from a dream experienced by Eileen prior to her daughter's coming-of-age ceremony. She explains:

I could hear people from another time singing, they were in a canoe. I couldn't see them but could hear the paddles splashing in the water; they were going up the Somas River and in front of the canoe were two swans, one was black and one was white; the swans were swimming at the head of the canoe and bringing that canoe in.<sup>785</sup>

This new song involved people singing, bringing the family closer together, and showing her daughter the right way to go, her journey in life.<sup>786</sup> Songs have a purpose; they support you, helping you to move forward in a positive way, giving strength. Songs and dances are not just for entertainment but for a reason,<sup>787</sup> and the words spoken here endorse that statement.

Songs are pretty but they have a purpose and they are supposed to do something; dances are graceful and they have a purpose and were supposed to help you in life. It is all about helping you move forward in your life in a good way. Dances and songs are not just for show and entertainment, they have a purpose about why you do it, when you do it, how you do it.<sup>788</sup>

Fundamental to their beliefs is a commitment to family, to community, place and tradition, so by sharing examples of Nuu'Chah'Nulth celebrations, the women's narratives take us forward towards a greater understanding of the depth and wealth of a culture colonisation has all but wiped out. The stories present us with the rich tapestry of Nuu'Chah'Nulth life, giving descriptions of healing procedures, traditions associated with birth, naming, courtship, food gathering and other major events of life. Daily courtesies and rituals are interwoven into the stories. It is a culture based on *lisaak* or respect, humility, support and responsibility to each other and to the family. The autumn and winter months were important times for families: potlatches took place and it was the time people travelled to other reserves for gatherings, weddings, celebrations and business. There are

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<sup>784</sup> Ibid., pp.5-6 of transcript.

<sup>785</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: pp.15-17 of transcript.

<sup>786</sup> Ibid.

<sup>787</sup> Interview with Anne Robinson, May 2009: p.7 of transcript.

<sup>788</sup> Ibid., p.7 of transcript.

ceremonies for everything. It is the women who prepare the setting, organise the food and arrange the event as it is 'women's work. You would have to feed all the people.'<sup>789</sup> Nowadays, attitudes are changing as men are supportive of women, a positive step forward as previously men would not have involved themselves in ceremony preparations. Everyone actively participates in the rearing and teaching of a child, and ceremonies are an important part of this process as gatherings offer a wonderful opportunity for *ha-huu-pa*.

Ceremonies happen from pre-birth to death, as women are the first teachers of new-borns. Female elders come forward and sing, 'and told stories meant to be told upon the birth of a child.'<sup>790</sup> Even before a child is born there is a ceremony, the first naming, when the unborn child is given a name. "At conception it was just a baby name and then, when we get born we get a name, and we go through the ceremony of the umbilical cord when it falls off," says Genevieve.<sup>791</sup> One delightful ceremony happens a few days after a girl is born when her ears are pierced:

I remember my Auntie Nessie piercing my ears, at least I don't remember but I remember being told Auntie Nessie, she was my grandmothers' sister, piercing my ears. And the purpose of piercing little girl's ears was so they would grow up to be good listeners. It was usually done by a family relative or some lady who was close.<sup>792</sup>

Another ceremony involves the belly-button (or umbilical cord) which is removed and put in a container with different objects symbolising a family's expectations for the little girl in later life. Jackie, who now has a law degree, had a pen included as her relatives wanted her to 'grow up to be very smart and academic, that she would be very successful in her world.'<sup>793</sup>

If you buried the belly-button with articles you wanted the child to be, to grow up to be good at sport or a singer, you would take whatever you wanted for that life and bury it with the belly-button.<sup>794</sup>

There is a traditional ceremony for cutting the hair when the child was a year old. The whole family are invited, and share a feast; it is a time when all the family songs and lullabies are sung. The first year of a child's life is an important celebration, as reaching one year old was considered to be a milestone in a child's life. In the past, if a child survived their first year they had the strength to grow

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<sup>789</sup> Interview with Evelyn Corfield, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2010: p.12 of transcript; it is still women who do the major share of work.

<sup>790</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009: p.12 of transcript.

<sup>791</sup> Interview with Genevieve, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010: p.23 of transcript; even before children are born grandmothers and Elders talk and talk to the unborn child so when the baby is born she/he already has knowledge has already learned to listen. Babies learn from the beginning, see interview with Delores Bayne.

<sup>792</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009: p.15 of transcript; Jackie reaffirmed the timings of this ceremony saying although it was usually carried out a few days after birth, it was an event that would happen during the first year of life, and stressing the importance of women being good listeners.

<sup>793</sup> Ibid., p.16 of transcript; the belly-button ceremony happened throughout the Nu'u'Chah'Nulth Nation; belly-buttons were buried in the yard ensuring the girls would always come home. It was unclear which part of the belly-button or umbilical cord was removed but from the women's comments I believed it to be the part left on a baby that drops off after a few days.

<sup>794</sup> Ibid., p.16 of transcript.

and live. Although this is not such a crucial factor today, the end of the first year is still worthy of a celebration, providing an appropriate time for a child to receive her formal name within a family gathering.

My grandmother and all her relations and friends would get together and decide on the names. Those names would take us throughout our lives so now we could become women as being held up means becoming a woman with the utmost respect as you are the one who will bring life. There was lots of singing and dancing and story-telling.<sup>795</sup>

Ensuring sustenance for the community and care for the young and old, meant women took on increasing responsibilities with age. The narratives express what girls encountered when they entered womanhood or the 'woman's circle' following puberty. A large ceremony, involving the whole family, is held when a daughter come-of-age. It is the time girls receive their young ladies' names, a very significant ceremony in her young life:

if you had a coming-of-age for a girl it would be right away as soon as she got her monthly period or it would wait until the spring when everything was new and you celebrate life; everything has to be new for her. In the spring when everything is new you are able to bring in new life as you now have the ability to bear children.<sup>796</sup>

At puberty, there is a distinct separation of genders when girls spend more time with the women of the community. The importance of the puberty ceremony was stressed time and again as it was the time when girls were told they held the physical and spiritual responsibility for maintaining the well-being, the life-force, the strength of the community through their ability to give birth. In one interview, a time in the early 1990s is remembered, when a family was preparing a puberty ceremony for their two daughters. It was strongly emphasised it was the women who dealt with the detail of the ceremony, all the preparations, and the event itself.

One day some of the older ladies were talking about how it is the women who have the strong minds, that it is the women who remember which is why it's important for young ladies when they become young women, you tell them good things because that is what they'll remember when they grow up, the things they need to know for their children and grandchildren; because that was always the teaching you would get. ... As I got older I began to see more of the complexities of all the simple little phrases they would use as we were growing up, wheels within wheels ... This is where it all began with humility and knowing who you are in your family and in the community; this is very important when you're growing up.<sup>797</sup>

People talk about the importance of respect or *lisaak* for women, explaining a girl's links to her family, who her mother is, who her grandparents are, especially her grandmothers: they 'bring her

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<sup>795</sup> Ibid., p.10 of transcript.

<sup>796</sup> Ibid., p.20 of transcript.

<sup>797</sup> Interview with Anne Robinson, April 2009: pp9-10 of transcript.

forward and say they would like her to be respected.’<sup>798</sup> At the heart of the Nuū’Chah’Nulth community, is the expectation women are treated with respect and honour, a certainty repeatedly stressed. The respect for older women is recognised in ceremonies, so at coming-of-age ceremonies, young girls listen to their grandmothers asking the people gathered there to respect the girls throughout their lives.<sup>799</sup>

I think the strongest core value that has probably persisted is respect for women. Our sons and grandsons feel it very strongly. They are always very respectful to the women in our family. ... The biggest sense I get and understand is that they [the men] have a responsibility to recognise that women are to be respected.<sup>800</sup>

However, it is not just respect for women that is important; it was quietly asserted women should also respect themselves:

I think my grandmother always said you have to respect yourself no matter where you go or whatever you do. So act respectfully, be respectable, and respectful.<sup>801</sup>

Respect for women is central to Nuū’Chah’Nulth beliefs. Men listen to and respect women’s ideas as Nuū’Chah’Nulth ‘men still ask women and the women still tell them what should be done, what needed to be done’; men do not make decisions until they speak to the women but ‘it had to be done in private, it was always in private, and then the decision was taken back to the meeting.’ Although it appears this comment relates to the past, I believe the present is also being referred to as this Elder was speaking about respect for and listening to women’s ideas saying: ‘they listened to the women, and sometimes they would ask the women what they should do,’<sup>802</sup> reflecting the protocols of two hundred years earlier when Captain Cook negotiated trade deals with the Nuū’Chah’Nulth people involving both men and women.

It could be said men had responsibility to protect and provide for communities but it is important to avoid interpreting this thinking from a western patriarchal framework. Men were often away for weeks at a time so it was women who managed all aspects of Nuū’Chah’Nulth life.<sup>803</sup> In their villages, women and men operated in distinct worlds; it was the jurisdiction and authority of women to care for and manage food resources and children. Flexibility was needed when there was work to be done, and depending on who was available to do it. Women had to know how to do all manner of tasks, taking care of maintaining order and survival in the community. The jurisdiction of

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<sup>798</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009: p.12 of transcript; many of the women were raised by their grandmothers.

<sup>799</sup> Ibid., p.12 of transcript.

<sup>800</sup> Interview with Ina and Charlotte, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.18 and p.22 of transcript; see also interview with Eileen.

<sup>801</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.23 of transcript.

<sup>802</sup> Interview with Kathy Robinson, May 2009: p.5 of transcript. There were occasional interruptions as family members and her carer popped in to check who I was and what we were talking about, although no-one interrupted what was actually said. She was very eloquent about the tradition of talking saying if someone came for advice it was always the women *that gave the advice the men only adding information if necessary*.

<sup>803</sup> Interview with Ina and Charlotte: pp3-5, self-sufficiency of women as they fish, prepare and preserve food, a staple diet; Interview with Evelyn: p.6; Interview with Kathy: pp3,5-6; Interview with Lena: p.6.

women's and men's worlds worked as it was a system aimed at ensuring balance and well-being in the community. As the Nuu'Chah'Nulth had both summer and winter households, inevitably women had greater organisational and community management roles as it required a great deal of discipline and management skills to move between these two locations. How women managed their work and social responsibilities that fell within the 'circle' was of utmost importance: to be a good worker was the core of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women's life, a highly valued attribute of never being idle, personal competence, self-reliance and the rigour of hard work, of knowing the protocol, the correct way to do things.

The way I was raised by my grandmother's generation, we were raised to work, to be workers for the tribe. They said 'when you are born here you are born to work for the people, to work for the chief, you are born to work.' That's how I see myself as someone who was born to work for the tribe. ... At my age now, it has more to do with ceremonial organising big events, the proper ways of doing things, the protocol, the respectful way, keeping everything in order as far as how to do things that are the traditional, social, ceremonial way in the community. They used to tell me when I was growing up I would be the anchor for the tribe, that my grandmother's generation, the women of that time, the women were the ones who shared things with me. One day 'you will be the spokesperson for the tribe, one day you are going to be an anchor for the tribe.'<sup>804</sup>

Strong links between protocols concerning the land and water, the importance of purifying through immersion in water, and people's knowledge of the flora and fauna are evident.

Traditionally, Aboriginal women have a special relationship to and respect for water, an archetypal symbol of fruition and childbirth, and so the significant role of water within ceremonies and Nuu'Chah'Nulth women's lives was described. For these women, water offers 'life-giving' forces accompanied by duties and responsibilities. For water to have any special meaning it must be an integral part of a woman's life,<sup>805</sup> so mothers and daughters spend time together in the forest, bathing and preparing for their important roles in social events and ceremonies, and cleansing in the sea for personal health. Two references to cleansing rituals show this importance, instances that take place over one hundred years apart, today and in the nineteenth century. As the women go into the mountains for these rituals Kathy speaks of earlier times:

...that's where we stayed for a while to cleanse and cleanse and cleanse. I watched every woman take care of their bodies; drink what they had to, to keep their insides clear. They made a brew of stinging nettles and drank that so they could clear their insides.<sup>806</sup>

The ritual of cleansing in the twenty-first century is clarified by another: 'For all our ceremonies we did a cleansing,' a custom that must not be rushed. On the morning of a memorial, mothers and

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<sup>804</sup> Interview with Anne Robinson, May 2009: pp1-2 of transcript; see also Interview with Eileen Haggard: p.6.

<sup>805</sup> Monture, P.A. & McGuire, P.D. *First Voices*: p.136.

<sup>806</sup> Interview with Kathy Robinson, May 2009: p.4 of transcript; Kathy is about 80 years old, an Elder. In recounting this story she was talking about her grandmother in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

daughters go 'out to bathe, talk to the creator, and to prepare themselves to come forward.'<sup>807</sup>

Memorials can last two days with many people needing to be fed and watered during that time so daughters have an important role in food preparation, keeping the food flowing throughout the ceremony, supporting their mothers and grandmothers, and standing up with them, as that is how they are raised.<sup>808</sup> For some Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, water is an essential element in healing the mind and body following traumatic events,<sup>809</sup> and part of the process involves the healing power of 'wailing near water'.

It was one of the best things I've ever done in my whole life to actually sit on a beach in the early morning and wail from the gut of my stomach ... I came alive again. And so our people, my people knew what to do. Now I'm going to teach everyone who wants to learn it because it certainly leads to life again, it made me come alive again; there was a purpose to it.<sup>810</sup>

Wailing released the stress of grief and, in the process, gave this woman the strength to use her knowledge to help other women heal. Following the wailing she 'walked into the ocean' to complete the healing process; at waist deep she washed herself and 'never felt the cold once.'<sup>811</sup> Louise talked about her grandmother's regular habit of going out to bathe:

I remember going to bathe with her in the creek to cleanse herself. She prayed and she taught me bathing was important, so when I'm really down I will find somewhere to bathe where I can be quiet.<sup>812</sup>

In the Aboriginal worldview the energies of water are closely linked with women as when children are born water precedes the child; water is the first environment known to a child. For the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, birth is a sacred event in the circle of life; it is a 'powerful celebration of life' that strengthens the people.<sup>813</sup>

The moment I met Kathy before I had explained the purpose of the interview, she started telling me of women's strengths when they gave birth, the whole birthing process. During the latter stages of pregnancy, Kathy explained, a young mother was 'told what was going to happen. It was stressed she mustn't tell anyone when the labour pains start, she mustn't talk about it at all.' They say if you talk about things 'you'll have a hard labour.'<sup>814</sup> So women stayed at home, prepared everything, and gave birth on their own. When the baby was born and was heard to cry, the waiting women intervened and supported the young mother, giving her herbal drinks to revitalise and strengthen her, allowed her time to rest, to get to know her new baby, wash and cleanse herself.

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<sup>807</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009: p.12 of transcript.

<sup>808</sup> Ibid., it was called 'an open-door policy'.

<sup>809</sup> This has certainly been true following residential schooling, and water is essential, integral to the healing process following bereavement.

<sup>810</sup> Interview with Louise, 30<sup>th</sup> April 2010: p.2 of transcript.

<sup>811</sup> Ibid., p.2 of transcript.

<sup>812</sup> Ibid., p.1 of transcript.

<sup>813</sup> Malloch, L. 'Indian Medicine, Indian Health' in Monture, P. & McGuire, P *First Voices*, pp466-479: p.470..

<sup>814</sup> Interview with Kathy Robinson, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.1 of transcript.



The women did everything else for the new mother, cleaning the room, washing clothes, preparing food and drinks, everything except looking after the needs of the baby.

They didn't stay in bed long they just took it very easy. People came in and because we had washboards, they did the washing for her and cooked for them, and the rest of the time she looked after the baby on her own. This is what I saw happening and this is what I was told from our late, late queen, our Hakku. She told me how things were done.<sup>815</sup>

A slightly different story was proffered during another interview when it was suggested other women supported women through the birthing process. There is the possibility the story may have been referring to more recent times and even to a different band; however, there are similarities as the birthing event was vividly described in the telling of the story.

[Women] worked right up until they were able to give birth. It was only women who were part of the birthing and were there to deliver the baby, all the women. You weren't allowed to scream because you didn't want your baby brought into the world screaming or hearing screaming or being frightened so the woman was given a stick to bite down on to stop her from screaming.<sup>816</sup>

Disposing of the afterbirth was another sacred part of the birthing process and recently there has been a revival in celebrating this event.

As children were born at home with the support of women, some experienced midwives, women from the community ensured a short ceremony was carried out immediately after the birth. One woman's grandmother was very traditional and had taught her granddaughter how to 'work the afterbirth' immediately after her own mother had given birth to her younger brothers and sisters. 'Working the afterbirth', not just disposing of it, involved giving a value to the afterbirth, moving its influence forward by performing a 'small ceremony around the afterbirth.'<sup>817</sup> This traditional event had disappeared due to residential schooling, and the expectation women needed to go into hospital to give birth rather than at home, but the practice is remembered by Elders. Now, Nu'u'Chah'Nulth thinking surrounding the traditional practice of 'working the afterbirth' is re-emerging amongst the younger generations.

Not that long ago a young girl came to me and says "I've had my first grandson and I want you to work the afterbirth." I said I would be honoured. And the only thing I told her was my grandmother always put a few cents in with the afterbirth, or whatever you want the child to be. The girl put a little hockey stick in her grandson's afterbirth.<sup>818</sup>

The reasons for these actions are obvious as gently encouraging success is considered to be an optimistic and positive to start to life. Nu'u'Chah'Nulth women are moving forward, looking forward;

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<sup>815</sup> Ibid., p.1 of transcript; I believe Kathy was talking about the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as she was unsure when women started attending hospital to give birth.

<sup>816</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.19 of transcript.

<sup>817</sup> Interview with Louise, 30<sup>th</sup> April 2010: p.1 of transcript.

<sup>818</sup> Ibid., pp.5-6 of transcript: The young girl came from Ahousaht, her home village; it was believed that if you added a specific object like money or a hockey stick to the afterbirth before the ceremony the child would be encouraged to grow up rich person or a sports person.

these women are agents of change although they are including traditional methods and ideas, balancing their time-honoured ideas with current thinking. The word is spreading. When asked, Louise, a particularly skilful and knowledgeable Nuu'Chah'Nulth woman, conducts simple but meaningful and powerful 'afterbirth' ceremonies for young mothers and their new-born babies. She feels very honoured to do so as the afterbirth has to be disposed of. Before the afterbirth was buried, blood was dropped onto the young mother's face to 'take away all the dark marks you get from being pregnant.'<sup>819</sup>

The skills have not been lost, the knowledge is still evident, so a video has been produced to show the importance of, and the skills involved in birthing, care of the afterbirth, and support for young women and their babies in Nuu'Chah'Nulth society today.<sup>820</sup> Traditional birth practices and knowledge are once again being considered and it is believed the revival of these practices is an inherent part of the de-colonisation process.<sup>821</sup> According to some of the women, gaps still exist in traditional knowledge and in the passing of this knowledge; however songs and ceremonies, beliefs and stories around birthing and young children continue to be told and learned.

In the past, it was a common occurrence for Nuu'Chah'Nulth women to be midwives, just one of the many community health management roles they were involved in: medicine women, traditional doctors, having a responsibility for disease prevention and health promotion in their communities.<sup>822</sup> However, the particular skill of midwifery had largely disappeared by the beginning of the twentieth century. Jackie said her grandmother had been a strong member of the community, part of a group of midwives whose midwifery skills had been transferred through the generations:

...her mother was a midwife, and I think there were three generations of midwives. She was a midwife. There were a couple of other midwives but it stopped with my grandmother's age because they didn't want to pass on the trauma and working with medical issues with families, so it stopped with my grandmother.<sup>823</sup>

These sentiments were reaffirmed by another when talking about her grandmother and great-grandmother, women who had the required skills and knowledge to be midwives, women who harvested medicines and plants from the forest for use in childbirth.

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<sup>819</sup> Interview with Kathy Robinson, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.2 of transcript.

<sup>820</sup> The video has been produced by a woman's son and daughter-in-law who have taken on a responsibility to learn about traditional knowledge. She is a video producer and has made language videos as well as a video to help women prepare for giving birth.

<sup>821</sup> Research on Dakota practices, American Indian Studies Department, University of Minnesota: research focuses on traditional midwifery, birth practices and knowledge of the Dakota/Lakota/Nakota Nation and their revival of these practices: accessed from [H.AMINDIAN@H-NET.MSU.EDU](mailto:H.AMINDIAN@H-NET.MSU.EDU), 25<sup>th</sup> February 2012.

<sup>822</sup> Anderson, Kim 'Notokwe Opikiheet – 'Old Lady Raised': Aboriginal Women's Reflections on Ethics and Methodologies in Health' in Monture, P. & McGuire, P. *First Voices* pp507-519.

<sup>823</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.1 of transcript; it is believed the issues related to increased instances of tuberculosis, and other imported diseases difficult to manage with natural remedies.

She was a midwife although that is not what it would have been called in our dialect but she was a very knowledgeable person in birthing, floating and assisting throughout the community.<sup>824</sup>

In her paper, Malloch agrees midwives had important roles in the community. They were the caretakers of the birth process, of new life, involving more than just knowledge and responsibility as women also needed to know about nutrition, herbs, gynaecology, pre-natal care, and natural childbirth.<sup>825</sup> Although some practices have returned (the afterbirth ceremony), it would not be practical to completely embrace traditional ways, a sentiment endorsed by the women. However, by combining traditional practices and western medical knowledge, it is very feasible to provide an extremely supportive maternal and infant care system at home and in the community by women who are themselves living in these communities and who are also trained health care workers. These narratives illustrate Nuu'Chah'Nulth women had the skills and knowledge needed for the well-being of their families and communities, skills central to Nuu'Chah'Nulth life. They also speak of the intergenerational transfer of knowledge between women. One particular comment quietly asserts this truth:

...when my children were really small babies, my elder sister said mum told them to wrap the babies up and put them outside. If you do that for at least five minutes a day they won't get sick; it helps to build up their immune system. I did that and I find that my children rarely get your common flu symptoms. It was something passed on that was really important and useful to do.<sup>826</sup>

Nowadays, many of these women are trained health and community workers, drug councillors, able to combine traditional knowledge with new qualifications. They present a powerful group of women with the ability to attend to the needs of their families and communities with an intensity of commitment extending into all parts of life, and death.

Nuu'Chah'Nulth women meet their community responsibilities with tremendous strength and tenacity dealing with the end as well as the beginnings of life. On the death of a person it was the women who attended the body and prepared it for burial. Once it is certain life has ended, the women cleanse the body and 'put them back into a foetal position; they get a big cedar mat and cover' the body.<sup>827</sup> The men take over the burial process, a procedure called 'putting them back into

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<sup>824</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.6 of transcript.

<sup>825</sup> Malloch, L. 'Indian Medicine, Indian Health' in Monture, P. & McGuire, P., p.470; Dr Marlene Atleo draws on Nuu'Chah'Nulth origin stories to address the complexities and ambiguities of Aboriginal health beliefs, inclusive healthcare and nursing practice in *Nursing Science Quarterly*: 'Nursing Practice with Aboriginal Communities: Expanding Worldviews' July 2005, 18: pp259-263 by Othmar F. Arnold & Anna Bruce, <http://nsq.sagepub.com/content/18/3/259.full.pdf+html>.

<sup>826</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.14 of transcript.

<sup>827</sup> Interview with Delores Bayne, Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2010: p.13 of transcript; see Sproat, G.M. (1868) *Scenes and Studies of Savage Life* Smith, Elder & Co, London with descriptions of preparing the dead for burial: *they [the women] placed it on a couch in a sitting position* p.257.

the mother earth' from where they came: 'it's like a womb, going back.'<sup>828</sup> Both women and men cleanse themselves afterwards, as the 'last part of the ritual is to cleanse, to get the blessing, and a sense of cleaning.'<sup>829</sup> These rituals give a sense of completing the life cycle. In historical times, burial of the dead was dealt with differently as some were buried in caves or on arches but the process was always dealt with sensitivity.

They weren't buried in the ground until the settlers came. All the women would come together and they would grieve; they would cut their hair as a sign of mourning because their hair represented a life, a lifeline, like a life-time of enjoyment with that family member, as a sign of loss. The women would just scream and wail and cry for two to three days.<sup>830</sup>

The interviews offer powerful stories of women's lives actively demonstrating the claim

Nuu'Chah'Nulth women had reciprocal power in relation to men when they lived in traditional communities. When asked if they believed women still have that power and strength today, the responses were always very positive:

Yes, they have the power today; they have the power to be leaders; they have the power to be speakers, they have the power to be role models. I have noticed there are a lot of women leaders and I find it amazing.<sup>831</sup>

Genevieve talked specifically about the strengths of her great-grandmother saying she was a 'really powerful woman, she was a leader.' However, she recognised her other grandmother as being more powerful, 'more chiefly [as] she was a chief,' owning large tracts of land as 'she owned a whole territory and ownership of land is very important because we're dealing with land treaties.'<sup>832</sup>

The women of today are equally powerful as 'women are empowering their daughters and their granddaughters; they are giving them strength and a strong sense of who they are and their role in life.' As she talks Eileen recognises her words apply not only to her own daughter but to all Aboriginal women:

I have a daughter. My daughter very much stands forward, and she is strong, she is culturally strong. She is a strong speaker. She will be a strong mentor for her own children; she is already a strong mentor for many of her cousins, and nieces and nephews from our extended family. I like to think it is because for all of her life I have instilled that strength

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<sup>828</sup> Interview with Delores Bayne, p.13 of transcript.

<sup>829</sup> Ibid., p.13: the teachings of her ancestors and grandparents are now declining so the responsibilities are being taken over by younger family members.

<sup>830</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009: p.15 of transcript: Although she was unsure of how long the wailing lasted she believed it to be less than 4 days as four is a holistic number: four seasons, traditional songs and dances were always repeated four times, four points of the compass, four directions; In the interview with Louise, 30<sup>th</sup> April 2010, the importance of wailing is mentioned and the protocols associated with funerals: you cannot wear jewellery, and you have to have your hair tied back. Water is an integral part of the healing process following bereavement; see also Sproat *Scenes and Studies* where he writes '*all the wompen begin to wail*' in his chapter on rituals. He says the women wail loudly, displaying their grief openly: p.259; and Sproat *Scenes and Studies* p.262 where he writes the women cut their hair as a mark of respect for the dead.

<sup>831</sup> Interview with Genevieve, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010: p.24 of transcript.

<sup>832</sup> Ibid., p.18 of transcript; if First Nations ownership of land is not acknowledged and omitted from treaty discussions, First Nations territories and lands are lost.

within her, and in a quiet sense not necessarily a militant sense, but a very obvious sense; empowering her from the moment she was born, recognising and celebrating her life, always making her a strong part of her culture, a First Nations woman, Aboriginal identity, recognising who she is and yet honouring all aspects of herself, being self-assured, loving herself and the way she carries herself, teaching her about all the things around her, her grandmothers teachings, connecting her to everything in a global sense, nurturing her, watching her, and doing things with her. And so, every single day and every single moment I am empowering her and trying to encourage the best there is within my daughter, transferring what I have as a gift so I can feel confident that each generation that follows is strengthened.<sup>833</sup>

In some families the process of empowerment has started although it is said that it will take time to find balance and to retrieve strength in Nuu'Chah'Nulth beliefs and values, 'to be able to walk forward with the tools and values of today'; they say it will take seven generations to get to that place.<sup>834</sup> One Nuu'Chah'Nulth woman strongly believes the process of empowerment will happen, will be there within her lifetime, as the strengths she sees within her own daughter and other young women inspire her to believe this is possible. As her narrative develops, Eileen refers to women's strengths unaffected by the impact of external forces:

...the strong core within us came from the ancestors. It was embedded so deeply that the external forces did not destroy us [Nuu'Chah'Nulth women]. By trying to destroy their power and strength, the opposite happened; they strengthened our identity by trying to destroy it.<sup>835</sup>

There is the belief this power and these strengths are already within women as, despite what happened to the women 'even way back when they were just little girls, the men always came to the women to ask, the men asked: women held power.'<sup>836</sup> When asked to clarify her words, to explain why she is adamant women are 'amazing' Louise says:

It was their skills, the different skills they had. ... Aunty Alice would do your splints when you had a sprain; and my grandmother Alice, she was a story-teller, and Nellie was a weaver and always talking to us, and another one was always patient with us kids, she was just loving. She always made you feel very safe.<sup>837</sup>

Women's strengths are reaffirmed: 'you see the power and strength within our women; today it is our younger women,'<sup>838</sup> a compelling declaration about Nuu'Chah'Nulth women. They firmly believe everything needs to be connected to education to enable women's strengths and power to be more intense and absolute.

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<sup>833</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.4 of transcript.

<sup>834</sup> Ibid., p.4 of transcript.

<sup>835</sup> Ibid., p.11 of transcript.

<sup>836</sup> Interview with Louise, 30<sup>th</sup> April 2010: p.10 of transcript.

<sup>837</sup> Ibid., p.12 of transcript.

<sup>838</sup> Ibid., p.13 of transcript.

Louise talks about returning to study to become an alcohol and drug counsellor enabling her to support and listen to her people in the communities.

The main thing our people wanted was to be heard; so these are the lessons I learned – to listen, to really listen, as clients know when you really listen to them, they can tell when you really listen to them, that you are really there with them. I learned that way back when and brought it forward.<sup>839</sup>

A grandmother, on hearing about the abuse her granddaughter had suffered in residential school, having her mouth washed out with soap for speaking her own language, said:

...they cannot erase your brain. They can do all kinds of things to you but you need to translate in your brain. It made us more powerful, gave us more tools and empowerment; that's what happened; the traditions, the culture, the language have survived, as skills were learned to hide our knowledge and language.<sup>840</sup>

Knowledge was power, and women were the knowledge keepers. 'We are the backbone of our community because when we hold the knowledge then we have strength.'<sup>841</sup> This powerful statement corroborates women's important standing in the community. Nuu'Chah'Nulth women have been tenacious in pursuing dual roles as nurturers of the family and as keepers of culture and knowledge. Often, in the past women were viewed from different perspectives: women holding the traditional roles as keepers of knowledge, as transmitters of language and culture, or women as conduits at the forefront of linguistic change. However, the narratives merge these perspectives, with women transmitting language, tradition, and knowledge down through the generations, inevitably playing a significant role in the evolution of language, culture, and identity.<sup>842</sup> Women are very concerned about the lack of Nuu'Chah'Nulth speakers and are determined to support initiatives encouraging young people to learn Nuu'Chah'Nulth, to look for ways to revitalise the language, to encourage language speakers and teachers as

...recapturing of language is important. My niece came from a position of zero language and now she is semi-fluent, she'll move into fluency in her lifetime. She's 35 years old, she studies and is an intricate part of the language development in our community; she is keeping our language alive.<sup>843</sup>

The women readily appreciate learning language is so much easier when you are young but realise it is so necessary to use the knowledge of the elders to ensure this happens. One elder, recognising her strengths as a Nuu'Chah'Nulth speaker, tells a delightful story about her language skills.

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<sup>839</sup> Ibid., p.12 of transcript.

<sup>840</sup> Interview with Genevieve, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010: pp.15-16 of transcript.

<sup>841</sup> Ibid., p.19 of transcript.

<sup>842</sup> Valaskakis, G. G., Dion Stout, M. & Guimond, E. *Restoring the Balance*.

<sup>843</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.16 of transcript; also Interview with Jackie Watts: p7; I was told a Nuu'Chah'Nulth woman has gained a PhD in linguistics, she is teaching courses to revitalise the language. Also language nests, first developed in New Zealand, are being tried in Huu-ay-aht where mothers, children and elders meet two or three times a week to learn Nuu'Chah'Nulth. Interview with Jackie Watts: p.8.

We have speaking roles to do as women. I am a speaker as a Granny. I've been doing speeches here and there; I've been sent to Ottawa, to Victoria too. I'm putting across my language; my language is my strength. The creators help me to pass the wisdom and the knowledge along that I know and to strengthen. The strengths I have the strongest in me is my language. ... My strength is my language.<sup>844</sup>

Nuu'Chah'Nulth women fervently hope their grandparents teachings will return, and this will only happen through learning and teaching the language.<sup>845</sup>

Women are strong: they are the givers of life, ensuring knowledge transference through the generations. Women learn from their elders, from grandmothers, aunts, and sisters. Being a grandmother or a great-aunt gives women opportunities to teach the knowledge and skills their mothers and grandmothers taught them; so the circle of life continues, becoming complete. Even as a grandmother you never stop learning.<sup>846</sup> At the core of Nuuchah'Nulth culture is respectfulness and reciprocity, and the stories give an insight into these principles and knowledge systems, how the women are playing central and critical roles in their families and communities as health care practitioners, nurturers, herbalists, councillors, community workers, and linguists. The role of a sister (or sister-in-law) is important so the strength is not only intergenerational but also between siblings. Often defined as 'nourishers', women are responsible for the health-care and well-being of the whole community, their knowledge of medicines and herbs shared with others.<sup>847</sup> Although these skills and this knowledge have decreased over the years, they are still present, and are now used to heal the women so they in turn can heal and nurture their families and communities.

Through a diverse collection of articles editors, Elliott, Stuart and Toman,<sup>848</sup> successfully reveal each contributor's work on the themes of health and wellbeing, each article contributing in a unique way to the debate. Collectively, the writings challenge perceptions of how the varying experiences of First Nation women in late nineteenth and early twentieth century contradict the traditional belief these women were meek, obedient and submissive, women side-lined in historical studies. By including First Nation women and emphasising traditional healing methods, the articles describe reactions of the wider community to the living conditions encountered in First Nations communities, attitudes ranging from concern about hygiene and cleanliness to acceptance of Aboriginal healing methods and practices. Canadian nurses introduced First Nation women to Anglo-Canadian values, standards of health, sanitation and behaviour, how the patients themselves

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<sup>844</sup> Interview with Delores Bayne, Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2010: p.3 of transcript; Delores went to Anchorage, Alaska where she was asked to speak her language, an ambassador for the Nuuchah'Nulth people. She knew she had to continue speaking her language.

<sup>845</sup> See Nuuchah'Nulth Tribal Council website for more information.

<sup>846</sup> Monture, P. & McGuire, P. *First Voices*: p.112.

<sup>847</sup> Interviews; Monture, P. & McGuire, P. *First Voices*.

<sup>848</sup> Elliott, J., Stuart, M. & Toman, C. (Eds.)(2009) *Place and Practice in Canadian Nursing History*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver.

perceived nurses. However, the papers fail to emphasise how a diverse group of women with varied working conditions, experiences, qualifications, and unique challenges have overcome adversity and managed to ensure their traditional healing methods and techniques have continued to play an important part in community life.

Issues concerning hereditary powers arose as women are seen as powerful people within their families and communities. However, there are questions about the legitimacy of women holding positions of power. The process of passing traditional territories through the generations does not automatically pass through the male line.

It went to a woman if there was no man, a son, and usually held in trust until a hereditary heir came along, a worthy heir. ... They had to be worthy, had to be a fine upstanding young man, it was not automatic. The males were taught how to be chiefs and it was up to the rest of the community to keep an eye on them.<sup>849</sup>

Within Georgina's family there has been a predominance of girls: she has two daughters, and her mother, as the oldest sibling, had inherited the seat from her mother. Georgina's daughter will claim the seat from her mother when her *time is up*. Georgina is the fourth hereditary chief, and she explains how the people are now choosing to select rather than following male lineage.

We had this really awesome Elder that lived in Nuchatlaht and we met with her and the major tribes in the northern region, Mowachaht-Muchalaht. We met with the elder lady because Maquinna was questioning himself about his position. 'What do you know about my seat?' And she says 'Don't ever question yourself. Hereditary seats are just that, they are hereditary; and if you start to question then what is the purpose?' She put him in his place.<sup>850</sup>

Although women's voices are heard within many political forums as chiefs, their work is often centred on the family, community, and health initiatives as well as networking with women across Canada. Women are (re)affirming Nuuch'Chah'Nulth traditions, and balancing the social systems, causing things to happen and change, and in the process educating and improving the health of the community and the nation.

The roles of women, outside of those in the hereditary high spots, are pretty much wide open. Women are elected chief councillors, women are attorneys, women are a lot of things in Nuuch'Chah'Nulth, all the way from homemakers up to business people; we're living in the twenty-first century.<sup>851</sup>

The most successful [women] are balanced; they have that grounding in them. They seem to be more helpful in their communities, bringing their communities along as they come along. There is a strong root in their individual family histories, in family traditions and practices. I

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<sup>849</sup> Interview with Evelyn Corfield, May 5<sup>th</sup> 2009: p.5 of transcript; these sentiments were stressed strongly.

<sup>850</sup> Interview with Georgina Amos, 27<sup>th</sup> April 2010: pp.1-2 of transcript; according to Georgina, hereditary chiefs have very little to do in day-to-day life in politics/band business so sometimes it feels it's just a title.

<sup>851</sup> Interview with Anne Robinson, May 2009: pp.17-18 of transcript.



think the two go hand in hand to be successful in today's world; it is having your roots but also learning and living in the twenty-first century.<sup>852</sup>

Efforts to preserve the Nuu'Chah'Nulth cultural heritage within a community context faces many challenges. There is a need to collect, document and archive cultural information, but this must be tempered by the ability and will of these tradition bearers, the women, to share, use, re-shape, and transmit such information. Much of the traditional knowledge, stories, and ideas continue to be shared within communities at a very informal level passed on through oral tradition or word of mouth, by example, by teaching, by transference through generations, carrying a great deal of practical information as well as more abstract concepts of history, culture, heritage, and identity, a system succinctly explained by Anne Robinson.

My grandmother and her group of friends, in their time women taught women; now it is the women that teach the men, that's today. What they talked about was really broad but it had to do with the family core, the genealogy, the family history. ... In my family it was the grandparent that teaches the grandchild and the next grandparent teaches the next so that my mother would have been taught by her grandmother and then later in life by her mother. I know that when I was growing up it was my grandmother's generation, they were my teachers; ... My grandmother started talking to me when I was really young.<sup>853</sup>

The following instance of transference of knowledge brings the whole process into the twenty-first century:

Just sit with them; they teach us all about that life cycle and how important it was. I can't begin to tell you everything that has been handed down. Everything that I am is a part of that; who I am has been greatly impacted not only by my mother but all the other strong women in my family, my extended family, my community. Some of the elders they are there today and continue to advise me, to guide me, to pass on to me what is necessary for me to pass on. ... I don't think it's an age so much as when you're at a point of readiness, now you are beginning to pass on all that you have accumulated. ... Now it's you, you take on that responsibility, now it's your turn to get someone else ready. The strength of who we were has always been there; now we can pick up the tools of today, take the beliefs and values of who we are and move forward.<sup>854</sup>

These explanations of knowledge transference are not unusual now, as with more young people attending university and having involvement in community projects, questions are being asked about traditions and language. However, with greater movement of people into large urban areas, traditional cultures are not transmitted easily from generation to generation in the same way or to the same extent to which knowledge was transferred in the past.

Whilst there are many hurdles and challenges facing the people in the transmission of knowledge and skills, issues could be highlighted by raising public awareness and through training,

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<sup>852</sup> Ibid., p.18 of transcript.

<sup>853</sup> Ibid., pp.3-4 of transcript.

<sup>854</sup> Interview with Eileen Haggard, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009: p.15 of transcript.

both of which impact upon each other and inform the wider audience. These two issues are not distinct, but rather, they overlap with a mandate for effective sharing of information to the public and the communities celebrating, disseminating and promoting Nuu'Chah'Nulth heritage, building bridges between diverse cultural groups and generations.<sup>855</sup> Take, for example, the weaving skills of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women. The following shows the importance of weaving to Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, the links between the protocols, the spirituality and the skills inherent in weaving:

I'm a basket weaver. I learned the skills from my grandmother and my great-grandmother. ... The designs were passed onto me from my grandmother, she was a renowned weaver. They used to make hats in four days. They were really professional and proficient; my great-grandmother was an avid weaver and she taught me about the spirituality of harvesting for cedar and spruce roots or sedge grass or reed grass. We had to fast and pray; I learned the hard way I can't eat, I just had water to drink. I learned the importance of fasting and praying, a spiritual thing that happens before we go harvesting. We still do it when we go out harvesting. ... We'd go into the mountains or we'd go into the swampy area by the ocean or the rivers for sedge-grass and reeds. We still fast and pray before harvesting ... and after we've harvested we can eat.<sup>856</sup>

I believe this is an excellent point to refer to one interview in detail, showing the extraordinary weaving skills of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women and their intention to transfer these skills to younger members of the community. I had been invited into Lena Jumbo's home, a Nuu'Chah'Nulth Elder and 'master weaver', for an interview.<sup>857</sup> She was sitting surrounded by boxes of cedar bark, spruce, and sedge grass, and bowls of water to soak grasses to make them pliable and ready for bleaching and dyeing.<sup>858</sup> Her weaving tools were to hand, and she was focused on her artistry, weaving a Maquinna hat using her whaling designs. However, she was also very keen to talk to me, relating her life-story, and describing her weaving skills. Lena lives alone in a typical Ahousaht house, steps leading up to the living space of a one-storey dwelling, with storage underneath. Lena has woven hats, baskets, earrings, and boxes for nearly all of her eighty-five years, taught by her grandmother with whom she lived. Lena spoke lovingly about her grandmother – her inspiration in developing her weaving skills, and it was Lena's passion for weaving that had strengthened her resolve to talk to me.

She used to weave and I would sit behind her and watch, hoping I'd learn. She started a little dolly for me; she used to make little dollies and sell them for 10 cents each. ... I learned basic weaving like I'm doing now, just weaving; but I didn't know how to change colour when it got short, and I'd ask her to change mine. She would do it slow so I could learn. So she would

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<sup>855</sup> G.G. Jarvis (Feb 2012) *Challenges in the Community Conservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Newfoundland and Labrador*, [www.mun.ca/ich](http://www.mun.ca/ich); Also referenced from <http://ActiveHistory.ca/>; Tangible History: Artefacts as Gateways to the Past, 27<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

<sup>856</sup> Interview with Genevieve, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010: pp1-3 of transcript; a weaving story, Genevieve did not consider herself to be a master weaver, but was extremely proud of her skills; see interview with Delores Bayne, p.1.

<sup>857</sup> Lena Jumbo, a Nuu'Chah'Nulth Elder, has a carer who looks after all her daily needs, clothing, and food.

<sup>858</sup> Interview with Lena Jumbo in Ahousaht, May 2010: p.8 of transcript.

do it slow and I still didn't learn. When I take it back I could look at it carefully and that's the way I learned. I was taught by my grandmother, I learned by repetition.<sup>859</sup> As we talk she becomes immersed in her weaving, changing designs, materials, and colours, the distraction of the recorder ignored. 'I have to wet it to make it pliable' she says, and then begins to talk about how long it takes her to weave a hat.

The shortest time it took me ... it took me a day and a half to get all this done. I was just using a needle to get it like this and scissors and a knife to thin it out. Do you notice it is very even? I use this knife, and I can't do what I used to do then. A day and a half it took me to fix this, and it took me two and a half days to make the hat. I used to get up at 5, 5.30 in the morning and go to bed at one. I didn't do the cooking. ... I also did bead work.<sup>860</sup> Women prepare their own materials for weaving. It is important for the correct grasses, cedar bark, and sedge to be collected, harvested and prepared, so women are very skilled at knowing exactly what grasses to pick and when to harvest, at knowing the rituals and protocols for harvesting cedar. Lena is eloquent in her explanation:

...this is sedge, it is not bark. This is the cedar bark this is the inner part of the cedar. I dyed all my sedge I have made so much of this. I have to get them bleached white ready for the dyeing. ... I now need to make some more; this is ready for dyeing. You can see it is nice and white. I like to take the core to make the black so it will go with this hat. I take the coarse ones and dye them black. ... This is sedge; you don't call it sea-grass. It's not sea-grass. There are two kinds of sedge, some that grows on the beach and not the kind we use for weaving. They don't last. This grass here it's coarse and it shows better; you see these are split.

They're a 'V' shape like this. I have to split them down the middle to weave hats.<sup>861</sup> Her own designs are intricately woven into her weaving, designs she will pass to another family member when she can no longer weave, when she deems the time is right. Her designs represent mountains, whales, canoes, men in canoes, harpooners, patterns and motifs reminiscent of earlier images on whalers' hats taken from Nuu'Chah'Nulth history. Lena says her hat will sell for \$2000 although she is very aware her prices are rather low: 'I am going to put my price up; they sell them for \$3500 once they are in the store.'<sup>862</sup>

And so began a delightful hour and a half with explanations on the skills of weaving, recounting the skills taught her by her mother and grandmother, not just weaving but jarring and preserving berries and smoking salmon, skills revealing the economic complexities of women's lives, and even a ten minute interlude where Lena struggled to teach me a few words of Nuu'Chah'Nulth, how to spell and how to pronounce words associated with 'water':

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<sup>859</sup> Ibid., pp.4-5 of transcript.

<sup>860</sup> Ibid., p.8 of transcript; she was very much younger and living in Victoria when she wove Maquinna hats.

<sup>861</sup> Ibid., p.8 of transcript.

<sup>862</sup> Ibid., p.2 of transcript.

...*ca?ak* has three meanings; *ca?ak* meaning a river and pronounced *tu-uck*, *ca?ak* meaning an island pronounced *ch-uck*, and *ca?ak* meaning water pronounced *chu-uck*.<sup>863</sup>

Quite rightly, Lena is proud of her weaving skills having earned the right to be known as a Master Weaver, and it is because of these skills her work is featured in the book 'Artists at Work'.

Laughingly, the reason she gives for inclusion is because she can weave without looking:

I am weaving now without looking; I'm not bragging. It can be done. Look at me, I'm weaving, I'm not looking at my work; ... if one knows how to knit, one can knit without looking. It's the same for weaving.<sup>864</sup>

This delightful lady is anxious her weaving styles and designs are transferred to younger generations and for this reason she is keen to teach weaving and traditional thinking, connecting her past to the present-time. Like other Master weavers in the community, Lena has identified a family member, her niece, to receive the designs she weaves into cedar-grass hats, baskets, and capes.<sup>865</sup>

[As] I never had any children of my own so the only grandchildren I have are my nieces. Yes, they call me grandmother, and this one moved in with me when my husband passed away. She does a lot of my laundry; and she cleans up a lot.<sup>866</sup>

When she attended residential school, there was no opportunity for weaving and it became a skill she learned during the limited times she spent with her grandparents in Ahousaht, times full of so many other activities.

Weaving was a way, and continues to be so, for Nuu'Chah'Nulth women to adapt to a rapidly changing economy; yet the women also make it their own by their individual designs. One Nuu'Chah'Nulth woman uses personal and family designs –whale, canoe, thunderbird and harpoon– as a healing way of retrieving health and stability in her life.<sup>867</sup> A seemingly abundant and endless supply of cut and softened cedar and spruce bark, sedge and sea grasses provide expert weavers with the materials and resources to weave cloaks, hats, clothing, mats, burden baskets, even earrings and headbands for sale or ceremonial use.<sup>868</sup> The Nuu'Chah'Nulth women were, and still are, adept at utilising the wealth of local resources for food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and ceremonial needs. Any woven articles not required for family use were often sold on the dockside in Port Alberni or Seattle, or along roadsides, hoping to catch the interest of tourists, the woven goods

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<sup>863</sup> Ibid., p.15 of transcript, a small part of the language lesson.

<sup>864</sup> Ibid., p.10 of transcript; she weaves while watching television.

<sup>865</sup> Lena is a keen conservationist, teaching her niece how to conserve water, stressing her recycling thought forcibly: *'this is what my grandmother taught me, to learn to save'* p.7; see interviews with Delores Bayne and Genevieve for weaving examples from family members: hats, baskets and headbands; Valaskakis, G. G., Dion Stout, M. & Guimond, E. (Eds.)(2009) *Restoring the Balance*.

<sup>866</sup> Explanation of family connections; it is very usual in Nuu'Chah'Nulth society for all Elders to be part of your family as children grown up in extended families, great-aunts often being called grandmother.

<sup>867</sup> Interview with Genevieve taken from notes following the interview, May 2010.

<sup>868</sup> Interview with Delores Bayne: p.1 of transcript.

complementing curio-seekers' interests in Indian goods.<sup>869</sup> In the early twentieth century Nuu'Chah'Nulth women produced woven goods-for-sale although the emphasis today, nearly a century later, is for women to weave for specific events, a woven cape for a coming-of-age ceremony or a Maquinna whaling hat for a wedding.<sup>870</sup>

Relationships between female family members are very important and need nurturing to reunite the bonds broken through residential schooling. Personal reflections showing strong connections between mothers and daughters and grandmothers are very evident, although actual blood relationships often appear difficult to see as within the social structure of Nuu'Chah'Nulth society everyone is related.<sup>871</sup> It is through this extended family network, the essence of Nuu'Chah'Nulth society is learned: sharing, respect, belief in oneself, resilience. Kinship relates to responsibilities, everyone striving to live in harmony, not only within the circle of life but also with each other. Residential schooling broke the circle but the circle is beginning to connect again. One way is through the interconnectedness amongst family members, between grandmother, mother, daughter, granddaughter, aunt, sister, and sister-in-law;<sup>872</sup> thus reciprocal relationships between female family members are being re-built, strengthening the ties weakened by historic trauma. Nuu'Chah'Nulth women spent time talking about relationships with their daughters, how time spent together has made relationships stronger through involvement in ceremonial activities, the transference of skills, the importance of protecting and respecting knowledge.

Today, Nuu'Chah'Nulth women are increasingly using voice to reclaim their position in society. The women understand many of the social problems they deal with every day have roots in the extensive trauma they experienced. They described their work as healing, meaning restoring physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual balance to their lives, families, and people in the communities. It is evident the work of these women is moving beyond their immediate locality to embrace the whole nation and beyond, as women view survival or nation (re)building – tradition, culture, language, and community – as encompassing all aspects of life, promoting health and healing, maintaining Aboriginal identity, language, and culture. First women need to heal themselves. Genevieve succinctly summarises the thinking of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women:<sup>873</sup> "We are the backbone of our community because we hold the knowledge ... then we have strength. The women are rising now, we're coming. Now we have a powerful vision: We are the first not the last."

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<sup>869</sup> Photographic evidence from the Archives in Victoria, viewed April 2012; the natural resource supply is limited now.

<sup>870</sup> Interview with Genevieve, May 2010: pp.2-3 of transcript.

<sup>871</sup> Interviews; Battiste, M. (Ed.)(2000) *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, p.270.

<sup>872</sup> Monture, P. & McGuire, P. *First Voices*; Valaskakis, G. G., Dion Stout, M. & Guimond, E. *Restoring the Balance*.

<sup>873</sup> Interview with Genevieve: p.19 of transcript.

# Conclusion: Balance and Continuity

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We're pulling back what we know now about our culture. The Europeans thought we were heathens, we didn't know anything and yet we had our physicians, we had our scientists ... now we're grasping for that to let the world know we have been here all along, we have been strong ... we're waiting for the world to hear us.<sup>874</sup>

Women have the power today; they have the power to be leaders; they have the power to be speakers; they have the power to be role models and I find it amazing.<sup>875</sup>

This research has considered the history and lives of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women over the last two hundred years, their past, present and future and the interconnectedness of all three, identifying and exploring the ways in which women's lives have changed through life stories, through historical and cultural reflections of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women in their 60s and 70s. I have related the histories of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth people with the *mamalhn'i* and their recorded history in the journals of Cook *et al*, identifying points where two groups of people meet, where history connects, the narratives illustrating a dialogue, a pathway through turbulent times, an example of resilience in present day history. The stories sustain each other emphasising personal experiences as the narratives do not simply record culture and women's history but engage others in an attempt to reinforce shared meaning, identity and understanding. The biggest challenge in creating a First Nations women's worldview has been the necessity to deconstruct colonial history, to understand how much these women have assimilated twenty-first thinking into their lives whilst at the same time sustaining Nuu'Chah'Nulth cultural beliefs.

The evidence has proved to be extremely fascinating, ranging from first-hand accounts written two hundred years ago, the first recorded history of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth, to testimony from interviews with Nuu'Chah'Nulth women in the twenty-first century. I have referenced such works as the journals of Cook, Meares, Walker, Mozino, Sproat, and Sapir as well as recent oral narratives, Aboriginal histories and women's studies. Indian Agent records and photographs have also proved extremely useful offering both visual and written accounts supporting journals and women's narratives, adding substance to evidence. Although the number of visitors in the sea-otter trading era of the late eighteenth century is not surprising, as traders will always be drawn to new areas of enterprise, commerce, and opportunity, what has been unusual are the number of written reports and journals by a variety of travellers on their observations of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women. Views on the women are similar, and each emphasises the modesty and virtue, the resilience and adaptability of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women as vital elements of political, social, economic, and spiritual life, a contrast

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<sup>874</sup> Interview with Delores Bayne, April 2010: p.18 of transcript.

<sup>875</sup> Interview with Genevieve, May 2010: p.24 of transcript.

to expectations, women's strong work ethic and the variety of specialised and proficient skills they possess, particularly in weaving, and preservation of foodstuffs, smoking fish and drying berries. I believe this is a new contribution to knowledge, adding to the debate on Aboriginal women's lives who, until recently have been marginalized and, when seen on the periphery in history have been much misrepresented. These early observers had noted the remarkable visibility of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women in community life, a contrast to glaring omissions in virtually any meaningful discussions in recent studies, whether historical, social or anthropological.

In presenting these chapters, I have drawn connections between wide-ranging circumstances, although at first there appears little connection between events. Is this because these episodes have not been written before? The parallels reveal connections across history: for instance, women's accomplishments relating to the waged-economy in the maritime fur-trade era of the late eighteenth century and hop-picking at the turn of the twentieth century. By drawing on journal material from across two centuries<sup>876</sup> it is possible to appreciate that despite colonialism, residential schooling and government interference through Canadian law there is curiously little change in Nuu'Chah'Nulth thinking in spite of the disparity between the 'years'. Many issues facing Nuu'Chah'Nulth women remain the same or are similar to those apparent when the mamalhn'i arrived at the end of the eighteenth century. Present day Nuu'Chah'Nulth women are remarkably similar to their ancestors, to women living two hundred years ago remembering, through their stories, when the nation was strong and balanced. The women are compelling, visionary, displaying strengths and courage, an ability to survive, to adapt to adverse circumstances, adjusting conditions to their own advantage, involving new and enterprising economic ventures.

The period of history encompassing the women's lives, the second half of the twentieth century, was a traumatic time for Nuu'Chah'Nulth women:<sup>877</sup> disruption to and fragmenting of families and communities, abuse endured in residential school,<sup>878</sup> poverty experienced while growing up between the 1930s and 1960s, growing dependency on alcohol and drugs for some women, loss of language and the curtailing of traditions, living with the legacy of colonialism/colonial history, marginalisation and loss of respect, and limited economic opportunities. In spite of these traumas and adverse conditions, the women are remarkably buoyant, expressing their hopes and visions for improved living standards, a better life combining Nuu'Chah'Nulth traditions and culture based on education and healing, a resurgence of their

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<sup>876</sup> The end of the eighteenth, the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

<sup>877</sup> The women's narratives cover second half of the twentieth century with stories from their grandmothers' time.

<sup>878</sup> The case of Her Majesty the Queen against Arthur Henry Plint, 21<sup>st</sup> March 1995 in Port Alberni is a good example of the abuse suffered by children in residential schools. Plint was found guilty of sixteen counts of indecent assault: in Appendix 7 of *Indian Residential Schools: The Nuu'Chah'Nulth Experience*, Report by the Nuu'Chah'Nulth Tribal Council.

language through leadership, knowledge and strength. “The residential school ruined our lives” says Louise,” but we’re still here.”<sup>879</sup>

Through the advancement of oral histories decolonisation occurs as these Nuuchah’Nulth women describe their strengths, the power and visions of their daughters, questioning and understanding the past through the transference of weaving skills, traditions and language from their grandmothers. I appreciate there are many complex layers to their stories; however, I can only re-iterate what I have learned concerning the power and place of Nuuchah’Nulth women, today and in the past, re-thinking and re-articulating Nuuchah’Nulth women’s role, status, power and responsibilities from their viewpoint. They have shown they are not scared of challenging and changing the impositions levied upon them through the federal system as their narratives offer an approach that confronts education, health, and the judiciary systems. The women are comfortable with change, secure in the knowledge they can adapt to meet changing need, something they have always done, as well as making effective use of those changes. Their stories establish future endeavours for the next generation of many Nuuchah’Nulth women. Jackie talks eloquently about her very necessary work with the Early Childhood Development Program, of supporting families, children and parents.

We work with families who have children or infants up to the age of six ... promote their parenting roles because we needed a balanced program alongside child welfare. We encourage parents, we work from their strengths, we are family centred, we do home visits to support them in their parenting roles. ... We collect all kinds of information on babies’ development and we’re their milestone they’ll meet for positive parenting.<sup>880</sup>

My sample size of oral histories was relatively small, comprising thirteen amazing and stimulating interviews although the body of the interviews involved approximately twenty hours of dialogue, an important distinction in the oral history field today. Their narratives offer a wealth of ideas and appreciation of how it was for these women during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, their distinct powers and skills, losses and gains, how they have used the strengths of their past with the benefits and knowledge of the technological age of the twenty-first century positively to enhance their lives and transform communities through education. Understanding Nuuchah’Nulth women and their diversities is necessary in building new relationships and developing communities based on respect and friendship so, despite the hardships and sadness generated by colonialism it is possible to appreciate and acknowledge the strengths of these women. The medium of oral history has the potential and power to celebrate Aboriginal women, their vision, wisdom and courage, to show how Nuuchah’Nulth women are not passive victims of colonialism but are advocates for their culture, traditions and for the women themselves.

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<sup>879</sup> Interview with Louise in Nanaimo, April 2010: p.10 of transcript.

<sup>880</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009: p.22 of transcript.



Life has changed dramatically since the meeting with the mamalhn'i. However, the essence of women's lives, as evidenced from the interviews, is remarkably similar as they still honour and respect their culture, language, skills and traditions, and ensure the transference of knowledge to younger generations.

Our history was passed on by the ancestors from generation to generation.<sup>881</sup>

We are the backbone of our community because when we hold the knowledge we have strength. The knowledge gets passed to the next generation, and they will teach my children and my grandchildren. My great-grandchildren are two and three years old but I'm still teaching the next generations the language and their roles in society, how to be good role models.<sup>882</sup>

Grandmothers and Elders inspired these women; they were often raised by them.

They were inspirational. ... They were always ahead of their time considering everything they had gone through in their own childhood ... They still have happy memories of their lives before they went into residential schools with their own parents, how loving they were. ...

That was something really practiced amongst everyone and among all families.<sup>883</sup>

Women's confidence to follow traditional ways in the twenty-first century and women-centred approaches to pregnancy and childbirth, supported and managed by the women in the community, and grounded in the belief of women's power to give life, were discussed by a number of women, and linked to the teachings they had experienced from their elders when growing-up: 'the grandmothers' teaching was very good.'<sup>884</sup> This is significant as women's roles continue into the present day: managing girls' transition into adulthood through ceremonies, acknowledging the transference of skills, the re-introduction of traditional practices, for instance dealing with the after-birth, the sea-urchin ceremony for health and vitality, and the teaching and learning of the Nuuchah'Nulth language. It has been the authority of the women themselves to shape and take responsibility for the growing child, to raise girls with the skills necessary for the future as incoming members of the band, to respect their elders, each other and themselves that have endured despite residential schooling.

Whilst interviewing Nuuchah'Nulth women, I realised how significant the natural world has been in their lives and memories. Time and again, the women made explicit reference to the forest, seashore and water, their natural world: being in the forest in quiet times, family berry picking, for sharing times between mother and daughter, for gathering sea-foods from the beach, for cleansing and wailing, and using the natural spaces to teach their children through example and story. Talking with these women, hearing about their skills, knowledge, and experiences in improving the health of the community, their families, and themselves has been an uplifting experience.

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<sup>881</sup> Interview with Delores Bayne, Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2010: p.2 of transcript.

<sup>882</sup> Interview with Genevieve, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010: p.19 of transcript.

<sup>883</sup> Interview with Jackie Watts: p.22 of transcript.

<sup>884</sup> Interview with Kathy Robinson: p.11 of transcript.

By applying their knowledge in the communities today (and in the future), the continued importance of life-stages and associated ceremonies, ensuring education is positively contributing to the health and well-being of individual women, families and communities, the women believe the circle will re-connect: not a simple process or even a short one as I was told it will take seven generations to unite families and communities, to give them the skills, knowledge and strengths to evolve and progress. Their belief in the power of education to heal communities, to take on the mantle to re-establish the 'circle' sends a strong message in support of family and community cohesion. Nuu'Chah'Nulth women are firm in their conviction of the transmission of values, traditions and skills to younger generations, empowering daughters, granddaughters, and nieces, to all female members of their extended families, ensuring continuity of knowledge, traditions, language, and culture, an inter-generational exchange of ideas, knowledge and skills: 'You see the power and strength within our women, today it's our younger women.'<sup>885</sup>

It has been possible to re-articulate women's role from their viewpoint. Women and men traditionally had distinct responsibilities, authorities, skills, and even space; however, one was not considered more important than the other, each given the authority and right accordingly. Each person had a valued role respected in terms of keeping the community alive and functioning effectively. The balance of the reciprocal system lies in the interconnected roles and responsibilities of everyone in the family and the community. Women managed resources and materials very efficiently, ensuring all had enough to eat, sharing excess with others less fortunate through the medium of a potlatch, a gift-sharing ceremony. Nuu'Chah'Nulth women had their own circles or jurisdictions where they were in charge, as women were the first teachers (men were away fishing for weeks at a time) always teaching others, women were respected and listened to. Elder women often held significant roles in terms of governance, language, knowledge and skills due to the respect they received, a system valued for the ways women looked after the communities, managed the health, well-being, and spirit of community members, working hard to ensure family and community survival, and skill transference.

Young life is to be cherished and protected, a fundamental aspect and key to the well-being of the Nuu'Chah'Nulth people and their society. The women's stories concerning different protocols and precautions undertaken with pregnant women, childbirth, and childhood, skills of self-reliance, preparation for adulthood, expectations and responsibilities, care-giving and family provision, dealing with every aspect of life until death, all emerged. The women were, and many still are gifted story-tellers, basket-makers and weavers, knitters and bead-workers demonstrating economic caniness and skill in their ability to sell their crafts; they knew how to acquire natural materials for

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<sup>885</sup> Interview with Louise: p.13 of transcript.

weaving, to preserve food, to prepare quality and quantity for gatherings and ceremonies. It is evident the women are keen to continue expressing these Nuuchah'Nulth qualities within a twenty-first century worldview to heal and develop communities.

Many stereotypes or portrayals of Aboriginal women have come from writings by 'outsiders' offering ill-informed suppositions or depictions of what they suppose women's identities are (or were). I wanted to write a thesis that would bring Aboriginal women alive and address the query concerning the 'Hidden Voices of Nuuchah'Nulth Women'. Despite being an 'outsider', not being Nuuchah'Nulth, not knowing the language and lacking a life time immersion in Nuuchah'Nulth culture and context, I have attempted to answer and find responses to the question. The narratives are inclusive of vibrant and contemporary ideas, their identities shaped by families and communities, showing how women are negotiating and managing the twenty-first century. The women I met were neither down-trodden nor meek, they were certainly not passive. Women improvise, often ingeniously, in pursuit of new economic possibilities of the twenty-first century seeking further education opportunities to accomplish community recovery.

Nuuchah'Nulth women place significant value on their privacy. However, I have conducted thirteen successful interviews; the women who had spoken little about their lives and feelings to an 'outsider', even to their own families, were courageous in sharing their life stories with me, crafting their stories in a way they felt comfortable sharing with a broader audience. By not pushing too heavily into personal thoughts or demanding precise answers allowed the women greater control over what they were willing to discuss, and so many addressed their residential school experiences openly seeing the potential for their stories to be transformative, for their voices to be heard. As each narrative is different, a personal statement, it is difficult to track individual life histories although it has been possible to see links and repetitions between the women's stories. An enlightening aspect of the interviews has been the women's willingness and enthusiasm to offer optimistic viewpoints of the traumas they have experienced, to show how and where they see potential for improvement in and recovery of community cohesion.

It has been possible to identify women's traditional roles, skills, connections between the young and the old. All stories are linked to health and well-being of individuals, to education and are collectively defined through the care and nurturing of the young, respect for the individual woman, for oneself and for each other. Culture came from the way people lived together, the way people treat each other, the way they interact with each other. The status of Nuuchah'Nulth women in the new millennium is still far from ideal with high levels of HIV/AIDS, FASD<sup>886</sup>, socio/economic dysfunctions, domestic violence and violence against women but what has been acknowledged is

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<sup>886</sup> FASD: Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder; see interview with Georgina Amos, April 2010 where she relates a story relating to FASD.

the high level of resilience of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women.<sup>887</sup> What is not in dispute is that through education women's lives will be transformed, a point repeatedly emphasised throughout all the interviews. These women had taken it upon themselves to retrain, to acquire new qualifications to support communities and families as health workers, language teachers and linguists, drug and alcohol advisors, prison workers, counsellors and educationalists. Education is vital to growth and change, for the empowerment of women. The women are developing the materials needed to support their learning, to encourage the dissemination of new and old ideas to intergenerational organisations, groups and families. The initiatives of Delores are proving to be an excellent example of using the knowledge of the Elders with the physical skills of the younger Nuu'Chah'Nulth.

The land (and sea), the bedrock of Nuu'Chah'Nulth traditions, needs revitalising therefore sustainable environmental practices, more important and necessary today than in the past given the harm done to the land, should be (re)introduced and it is the women who are suggesting ideas. Gardening and allotments have increased, with opportunities for selling produce as well as producing for personal consumption, and sharing excess with the community. By using her knowledge of the area and the skills she already possesses, Delores is keen to develop the idea of community gardens in unused areas of Reserves as her way of moving forward, her idea of renewal, of responsibility to the land. She has set herself a challenge, to fulfil her dream to develop vegetable gardens on Reserve land ignored for over fifty years, to make the land useful again. It is her intention to produce crops to be shared amongst all the families in the isolated communities. Delores is also very keen to involve the younger generations in this venture, to use their physical strengths and energies in enabling it to happen, an inter-generational collaborative project; she wants 'to teach what she was taught, to pass on her knowledge.'<sup>888</sup> As a Nuu'Chah'Nulth language speaker, Elder, teacher and knowledge bearer she travels around the country and abroad, enthusiastically spreading her ideas through her language, the heart of Nuu'Chah'Nulth culture and knowledge retention, encouraging people to become involved as she is very aware, because of her age, she needs others to be engaged with her ideas and enthusiasm. Delores considers language to be the most fundamental way cultural information is communicated and preserved so the gardening initiatives proposed by Delores are important not just for land development for people's benefit but also as a way to share language, teachings and knowledge with others outside their culture. Environmental responsibility is as essential to a healthy and sustainable society as social equity, economic viability and cultural vitality.

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<sup>887</sup> This was strongly brought home to me the interview with Brenda who has, despite great hurdles, completed her education and acquired qualifications enabling her to achieve employment.

<sup>888</sup> Interview with Delores Bayne, April 2010: p.1 and p.5.

The economic skills and responsibilities of Nuu'Chah'Nulth women were varied: food preparation, the making of clothes, child care, weaving and basketry as well as significant roles in essential livelihood activities such as smoking and drying fish, collecting, harvesting, preserving, and smoking clams, shellfish, preparing and mending fish nets, bottling and canning, harvesting berries from the forests, drying and preserving for winter use.<sup>889</sup> There was a common understanding within Nuu'Chah'Nulth society that if the women were ever harmed or prevented from carrying out these essential activities it would result in a negative impact on the whole nation.

Studying women's interview responses to questions on community involvement and cultural continuity not only highlights the important significance of women's household work for economic survival but also reveals the uniqueness of First Nation women, Nuu'Chah'Nulth women, and their prominence in the well-being and continuance of their Nations. Their words illustrate how women were the chief providers for the sustainability of everyone from earliest times; how, as grandmothers and mothers, women accepted both traditional and modern responsibilities for the survival and continuity of their people; how women have used whatever opportunities presented to develop and market their skills by integrating their cultural products, practices and skills into mainstream society and economic opportunities.<sup>890</sup> Nuu'Chah'Nulth women continue to use these skills and their knowledge for the benefit of their communities but are adapting to the demands of the twenty-first century; like their ancestors in the maritime fur-trade era, using the best and most suitable innovations to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

First Nation women were disadvantaged when their traditional tribal power base as strong respected women was eroded, becoming victims of government impositions. Fundamental to their beliefs is women's commitment to the family, to the community, to place, to tradition, and to themselves. Sharing examples of Nuu'Chah'Nulth celebrations, story-telling and innovative community initiatives takes us a step forward in understanding something of the wealth and depth of a culture colonisation all but wiped out. The interviews, a rich tapestry of Nuu'Chah'Nulth life, provide evidence of women's traditional role through detailed descriptions of methods of healing, traditions associated with giving birth, naming, food gathering, and other major events in everyday life, with daily courtesies and rituals interwoven into their accounts and stories. Consider the ritual of using soft pine leaves to brush the skin gently ensuring calmness, peace, and composure,<sup>891</sup> so necessary before a meeting or gathering, or the sea urchin ceremony for health and healing,

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<sup>889</sup> Interview with Genevieve: pp.8/9 and 11 for preparation, smoking and preserving herring and salmon, pp.13-14 for salal jam-making.

<sup>890</sup> Ibid., p.11.

<sup>891</sup> This ritual was carried out prior to my interview with Anne Robinson.

strength and well-being.<sup>892</sup> This research enhances the lives, health and well-being of Nuuchah'Nulth women. The narratives present stories of resilience, of survival, with each woman demonstrating in different ways their strengths in overcoming adversity.

My conversations with these women reveal that asserting their tribal identity does not lead to bitterness or isolation but rather an enthusiasm, drive and commitment towards greater mobility and recognition as Nuuchah'Nulth women and at the same time the aim of establishing greater understanding between different cultures. Conversations between women from different cultures rewards the reader with a deeper understanding of Nuuchah'Nulth women.

The path to empowerment and balancing the past and the future is far from straightforward as Nuuchah'Nulth women face challenges as they urge towards greater visibility and voice. However, they are managing to retain and give voice to their tribal identity and culture. These women's stories deserve to be brought to a wider audience, beyond their own communities. Their lives have been a journey of healing, of trial and error, of determined persistence and of hope: the changes occurring over three generations strengthening their belief they will achieve the goal of reclaiming their voice. In the words of one Nuuchah'Nulth Elder:

We have been here all along. We have been strong. We're making the world hear us, to see us and hear our voices. Not just Europeans but our own generations as well.<sup>893</sup>

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<sup>892</sup> Interview with Lena Jumbo.

<sup>893</sup> Interview with Delores Bayne, 29<sup>th</sup> April 2010: p.19

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